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Moffat, John Smith, 1835-
1918.
John Smith Moffat, C.M.G.,
missionary

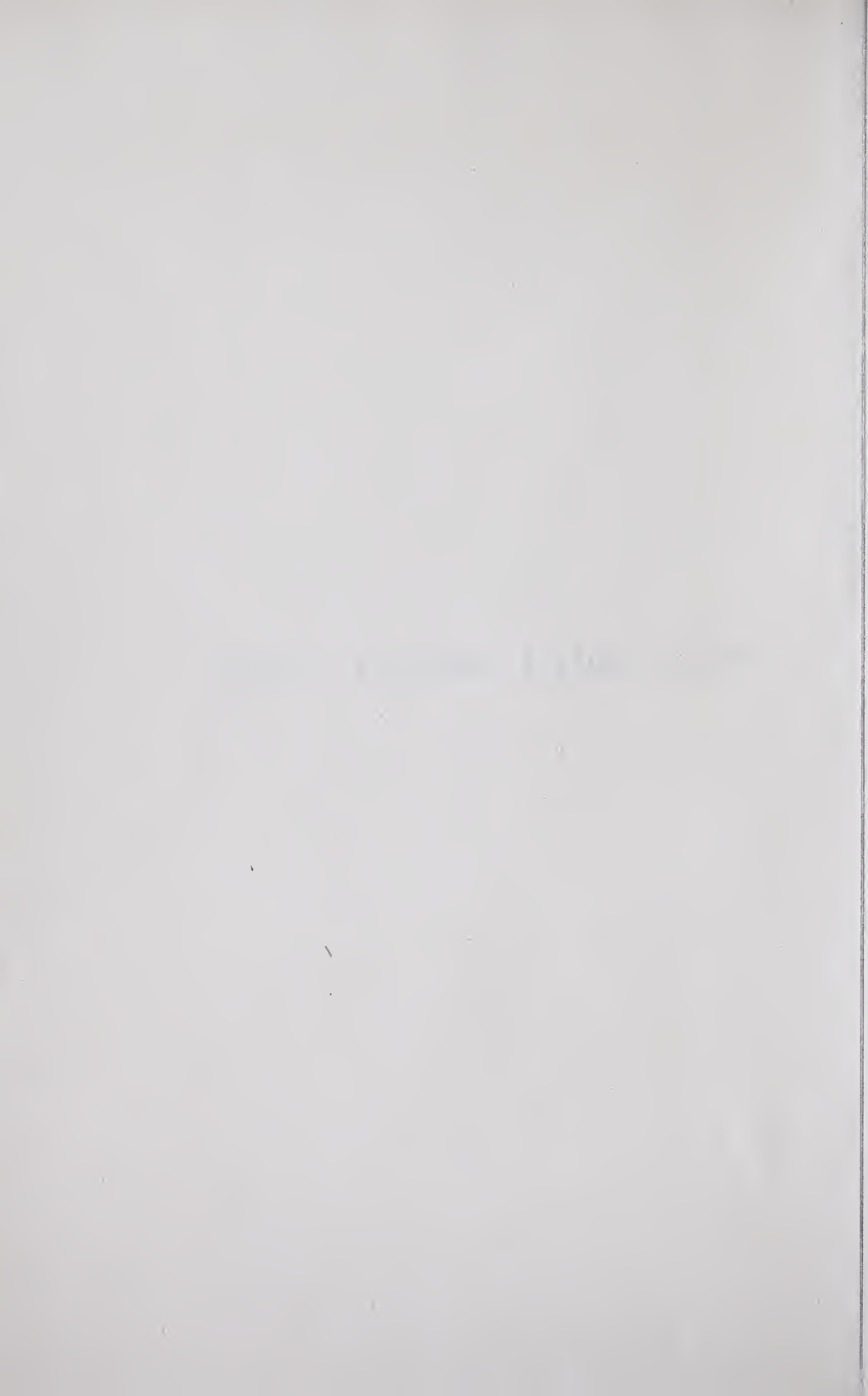
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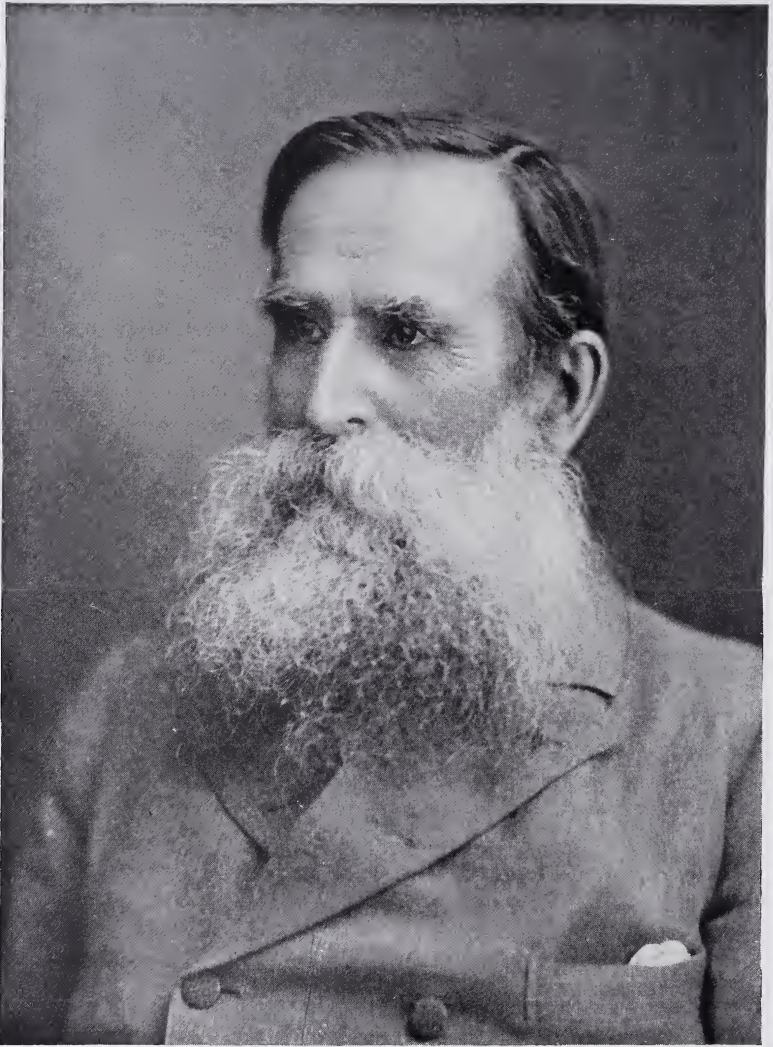
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JOHN SMITH MOFFAT, C.M.G.





Marion Barnard, Cape Town.

Yours sincerely
J. I. Moffat.

✓
JOHN SMITH MOFFAT

C.M.G.

MISSIONARY

A MEMOIR



BY HIS SON

ROBERT U. MOFFAT, C.M.G.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1921

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TO
ALL THOSE BRAVE, HEROIC SOULS
WHO IN THE PAST
SPARED NOT THEMSELVES
IN THEIR ATTEMPTS
TO LIGHTEN
THE BLACK MAN'S BURDEN,
THIS BOOK,
WITH THE AUTHOR'S REVERENT HOMAGE,
IS DEDICATED.



PREFACE

THE honour of being entrusted with the compilation of this volume came to the writer unsought and undesired, and solely through a process of elimination of the more unfit did the lot fall upon him.

Realising how easily a good subject may be spoiled in unskillful hands, he can only hope that the character and individuality which he has attempted to delineate may in themselves divert attention from any faultiness of their setting.

Looked at from without, whether through the idealising mists of memory, or in the records of thoughts and actions as revealed by letters, the life here dealt with appears strangely guileless, and as a result the writer may have laid himself open to the charge of having treated his theme in the typical style of an adoring relative.

For this reason, if only to demonstrate his desire to paint a true and living picture, he would almost have welcomed opportunities for filling in those lines of shade without which no representation of human endeavour can correspond with reality; yet he is bound to confess that the strong white light of truth shining in and upon this personality seems to leave little place for shadow, except on that further side known and discernible only by "other, larger eyes than ours."

In attempting to give a faithful impression he has frequently had to adopt a critical and controversial attitude, most regrettably in the matter of his father's relations with his missionary colleagues, but this has been unavoidable, as he himself realised.

Some years before his death, when asked by his brethren of the Congregational Union to write his autobiography, he replied :

"For some reason my whole life has been spent in an atmosphere of controversy. . . . I could not be true to myself if I wrote what professed to be an autobiography

if I did not give the other side of the story, and from my point of view it would not be very creditable to the London Missionary Society. So you see the matter requires very careful consideration."

The task, which he himself did not see his way to attempt, has devolved upon the writer, who has always had to bear in mind that, rather than that the cause of missions should suffer, the subject of this memoir would have preferred that his own name might be blotted out for ever from the book of remembrance. But missions are after all only human organisations, however elevated may be their aims; it would be absurd to expect to find in them perfection, and a little wholesome truth should tend to purify and to invigorate rather than the reverse. However that may be, the writer's chief aim from beginning to end has been to further the ideals of him whose story he has told.

A similar difficulty has confronted him in dealing with some political events. To one who is proud of his birth-right it has been humiliating to revive the memory of perhaps forgotten episodes, such as shed no lustre on the vaunted justice of Britain. But, much as he deplors the necessity for exhibiting his country in an odious light, he can take comfort in the firm conviction, based on wide knowledge and experience, that in no circumstances do primitive peoples receive, as a rule, and in the end, more just and humane treatment than under the British flag.

To those who kindly supplied him with letters from his father the writer tenders his grateful thanks. He is also much indebted to Lord Milner and to Lord Loch for permission to publish letters, and to his brother, Mr. H. U. Moffat, for valuable information and criticism.

Two of the illustrations he owes to the kind assistance of Mrs. Beare and Mrs. Howard Williams.

An expression of gratitude is also due to his publisher, whose tact so smoothly bridged the gulf that lies between his ripe judgment and the writer's own inexperience.

Finally, if, so far as concerns its form, there is anything of good in this book, the writer gladly acknowledges that it must be ascribed to the influence of one who for some years was his close companion along life's dusty highway.

"Palnam qui meruit ferat."

January 31, 1921.

R. U. MOFFAT.

INTRODUCTION

JOHN SMITH MOFFAT, unlike his father, Robert Moffat, or his still more renowned brother-in-law, David Livingstone, acquired no world-wide reputation, and his name was but little known beyond the borders of the land of his birth and adoption.

Judged by commonly accepted standards, he would not be numbered among the great ones of the earth, though, as one of his obituary notices aptly and significantly put it, "He was greater than anything that he ever did." But this might with equal truth be said of many, and in itself would not constitute a sufficient reason why his biography should be written. He himself, content with the knowledge that any good he might accomplish carried within itself the seed of immortality, cared little for the opinion or the plaudits of the world, and that his own name, like that of most, must needs be writ in water troubled him nothing.

But the reminiscences of any intelligent man or woman of fourscore years can seldom be entirely devoid of interest, if only in virtue of the fact that they form links in the ever-crumbling chain that connects us with the past. In proof of this, how often does it not happen that, when the tie at length snaps and the last silence falls, we find ourselves regretting lost opportunities for learning something of the age that separates us from that other that has already faded into the shadowy realm of history? This applies with added force when the memory stretches back over a period of unusual transformation, such as the past century has enfolded, and in South Africa the changes, though in some ways less rapid, have been in others no less striking than elsewhere.

When Moffat was born it was, except for its coasts, a practically unknown land, and around the very words "the

far interior" there still hung a halo of romance and mystery. Within the space of a single life all this has changed, so completely that those who are only now coming to maturity can hardly realise or imagine what their grandparents were called upon to face.

In the opening up and development of his native land it fell to Moffat to bear a worthy if inconspicuous part, and it has appeared not unreasonable nor presumptuous to conclude that, apart from the intrinsic interest of his experiences, his record may have some value as a footnote to history.

But here the biographer treads on dangerous ground. All authorities, ancient as well as modern, unite in warning him to remember that he has undertaken to write a life, and not a history.

Bearing this precept in mind, the writer has endeavoured, whenever it has been necessary to refer to public events, to make the historical subordinate and subservient to the biographical.

His task as a whole, in one way, has been rendered easier by the fact that Moffat left behind him some written reminiscences covering the first half of his life. These were originally compiled at the request of and for the benefit of his own family; but whether he anticipated any public use being made of them it is impossible to say, though from their studied restraint it would almost appear that he had this possibility in mind.

It is a simple tale that he tells, without embellishment.

Some men, with the material and opportunity at his disposal, would have been tempted to give more colour to the picture. But this was not Moffat's way, for he had a horror of exaggeration and sensationalism in any form. Unfortunately his story was never finished. Not that death interrupted it, for he had apparently set himself a limit.

His reasons for this are not known, but it would be in keeping with his character, if he felt that the events of his later years were still too recent to allow of his treating of them with that calm detachment and broad charity that are so apparent in all that he writes of his earlier life.

Though the contribution supplied by Moffat himself has in one direction lightened the labours of his biographer, in another it has increased the delicacy of his position.

It is notoriously difficult to complete or to amplify an unfinished script. A simple narrative told in the first person may be interesting and charming enough, whereas when given in the words and style of another it may so easily become dull and ineffective.

For this reason it may appear to some that it would have been preferable to present the original, so far as it went, complete, and then to have added what was necessary. The plan adopted by the writer may be open to objection, but it seemed to him that it would give a more ordered impression, much as the juxtaposition of varying styles might introduce a discord, by intensifying the contrast between the subjective and the objective point of view.

Some of the letters of Emily Moffat, the brave and devoted wife, have been included. They are strictly relevant, since they deal with and describe events in which Moffat himself took part.

They have, moreover, a value of their own in that they direct attention to the part that the women of our race have taken in the spread of civilisation. Throughout the length and breadth of Africa there are many lonely and even unknown graves of white women and children, silent and perhaps forgotten witnesses of those who in the van of progress laid down their lives that others might enter into their heritage.

The word "brave" as applied to Emily Moffat might seem inappropriate to those who knew her as one of the most constitutionally timid of women; that in spite of this she should have accomplished what she did indicated courage of the highest order, especially as with her intensely imaginative nature she must have died daily in anticipation. It is a fashion among the rising generation to speak pityingly, almost scornfully, of its grandmothers. It is true they troubled themselves little about the rights of women: they neither rode bicycles, drove motor-cars, nor smoked cigarettes; yet, as the letters of Emily Moffat show, they were prepared to face dangers and privations that might well appal the stoutest hearts among their descendants. And this, not from a spirit of adventure or a love of sport, not for wealth or worldly fame, but at the call of duty, and in response to the promptings of divine and human love.

Modern womanhood, no doubt, could and would rise

if necessary to a similar level, but the remembrance of what their grandmothers were capable should surely serve to remind the generation of to-day that if they are, and have been, able to play the part of heroines, it is only because they come of an heroic ancestry.

In this, as in all else written here, there is no intention of suggesting invidious or unsuitable comparisons, but the records of such lives as those of Moffat and his wife only illustrate the often forgotten fact that much of the best work on earth is done by unseen, unknown hands.

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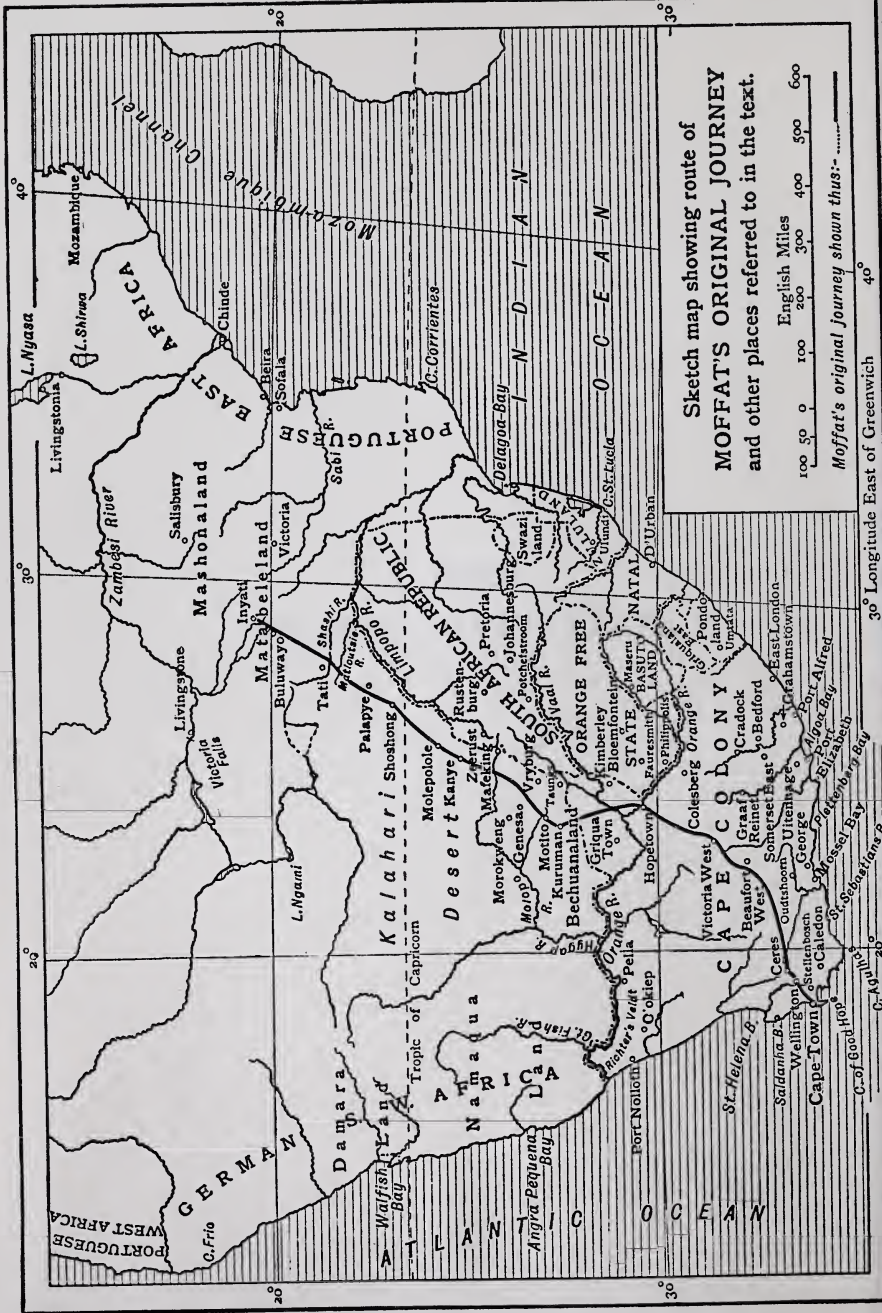
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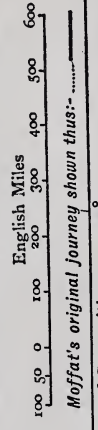
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PART I
EARLY YEARS, 1835-1858



Sketch map showing route of
MOFFAT'S ORIGINAL JOURNEY
 and other places referred to in the text.



30° Longitude East of Greenwich

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND FAMILY

As a distinguished critic ¹ has recently pointed out, a disproportionate amount of space is often devoted in biographical literature to the rather irrelevant and not always interesting subject of family history. Whether or not this custom is justifiable the present writer is fortunately not called upon to decide, since the records of the Moffat genealogical tree, so far as they are known, already appear in another volume to which the curious can refer. It will suffice here to give a few details of Moffat's own and his father's children.

He was one of a family of ten—such profusion of olive branches was the rule rather than the exception in those days—the fourth son and eighth child born to the Rev. Robert Moffat, D.D., the once well-known missionary.

One brother and one sister died in infancy at Kuruman, and another brother fell a victim to measles when seven years old, while on a voyage to England. The eldest of his sisters, Mary, married Dr. David Livingstone, and lies buried on the Zambezi's banks, a perhaps not inappropriate resting place for the wife of a great African explorer. The elder brother, Robert, a man of some force of character who might have achieved some reputation as a philologist, died comparatively young of pneumonia, near Kuruman, in 1862.

The remaining five children survived their father and all reached an advanced age, the youngest, Miss Jane Gardiner Moffat, though now an octogenarian, being still hale and hearty.

Moffat himself had a large family of eleven, six sons and five daughters. The firstborn died in infancy, also two daughters (twins)—the remainder all surviving him. It

¹ Sir Edward Cook, in his *Literary Recreations*, 1st series.

is an interesting and noteworthy fact, not confined to these two families, that the children of these pioneer missionaries were as a rule wonderfully healthy and robust, in spite of, or perhaps as a result of, the conditions under which they were born and bred.

Possibly it was an example of the survival of the fittest, but, if so, it must be observed that it was the majority who came through, in this particular instance fifteen out of twenty-one. Of medical aid there was none, either at the time of their entry into the world or subsequently. Sanitation in the modern sense of the word did not exist, and looking back to his childhood in the light of present knowledge and experience, the writer must confess that he is amazed that any of these children lived.

It must not be thought that the ordinary ailments of civilised countries were unknown, for these came and went as in Europe, while in addition there were the diseases peculiar to tropical and subtropical regions.

As illustrating what risks these isolated families ran, it may be mentioned that in 1871 diphtheria broke out in Moffat's home at Kuruman. He himself and the six children were stricken almost simultaneously, Mrs. Moffat alone escaping, and single-handed she had to nurse them. Wonderful to relate, all recovered, though one of the girls came near to death, and one of the boys developed a diphtheritic paralysis. Moffat always considered that, humanly speaking, his daughter's life was saved by open-air treatment, in which he had great faith. Such a thing at that time was unheard of, and he may therefore be said to have been an empirical pioneer of a procedure the value of which later wisdom has amply demonstrated. During the critical days when the child's life hung in the balance she was carried out into the open air, and one of the earliest recollections of the writer is the remembrance of seeing his sister lying gasping for breath in her cot under the trees in the garden.

In some directions these children of the backwoods must have developed a certain immunity during infancy; otherwise it is difficult to account for the fact that they were often given such food and drink as would be poison to a modern civilised child. Also, in those days, mothers fed their babies in the manner in which nature intended, a method that has an incalculable influence in reducing

infant mortality. No doubt the open-air, free life represented a powerful factor in their favour, since weeks and months were sometimes spent by them in a kind of gipsy existence beneath the sun and stars.

Over trackless, waterless wastes, through swollen rivers and rain-sodden plains, those parents journeyed with their families in jolting wagons, hundreds of miles from all human aid, mindful of, yet disregarding, all the hideous possibilities that hung around them on every side.

It was a rough-and-tumble, not to say hand-to-mouth, existence, but faith was justified and these children throve.

Moffat, it is true, sent his two eldest, at the age of seven and five respectively, to England, but the rest of his family were all brought up in the wilds, the youngest being already ten years old when they moved to the comparative civilisation of the Colony. It was under the former conditions that Moffat's own infancy and childhood were passed, and what he remembered of them is given in his own words, which tell something of the conditions of life and travel in the middle years of last century.

CHAPTER II

BIRTHPLACE AND RECOLLECTIONS OF CHILDHOOD

“ I WAS born on the 10th of March, 1835, at Kuruman in Bechwanaland. Kuruman was at that time a station of the London Missionary Society. It had really been in the first instance the furthest missionary outpost north of the Orange River. My parents had settled about fifteen years before in that neighbourhood. For a long time they had lived in the gloom of the darkest discouragement. Nothing but a heroic faith availed to keep them and their colleagues, the Revs. R. Hamilton and R. Edwards, from abandoning their post in despair. They held on, however, and at the time of my birth the tide had turned and the position of the mission might have been called ideal. The suspicion and hostility of the heathen had been overcome; a reaction had set in, and there was scarcely any limit to the confidence and devotion of the native converts, and indeed of the native community in general.

The station had been removed to a more suitable spot, large irrigation works had been carried out, substantial dwelling-houses had been built, and the crowning achievement had been the completion of a solid stone church, the timber for the roof of which had been brought from the Magaliesberg Mountains, in what is now the Rustenburg district of the Transvaal, about three hundred miles away to the north-west. Nearly all this had been accomplished by the willing aid of the natives. The contact of these with Europeans had so far been limited to visitors, very few and far between, from the South. Most of these were hunters and travellers, men of respectable character, gentlemen in fact; in whose conduct and deportment the natives saw nothing to conflict with the teaching of the missionaries. This held good, too, of the traders, Hume and Millen, who had settled on the station. The missionaries welcomed them for their assistance in advancing

habits of civilisation, such as are one of the appropriate secondary results of the preaching of the gospel to a people sunk in degrading barbarism. In return for the countenance of the missionaries, the traders had rendered valuable aid in the building of the church.

The comparatively arid and uninviting character of the country had saved it from becoming the scene of a migration, similar to that which was already beginning further eastward, in the regions now known as the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, where the Emigrant Boers, dissatisfied with the British regime, were settling and taking possession of the land. Bechwanaland so far had escaped this, and its inhabitants were for the time left in peace.

I have spoken of the condition of things at this stage of the Kuruman mission as almost ideal. It was a passing phase, as is the case too often, unfortunately, in the history of missions to heathen natives in secluded regions. Later on there come visitors of a different type, men of a low stamp, whose lives are a practical contradiction of the teaching of the missionaries. The natives not unnaturally ask why, if Christianity is the religion of the white men, it is not consistently accepted by them all. There comes also a time when the advancing wave of white colonisation arrives in these regions, and the struggle for the ownership of the land commences; and the natives are unable to recognise this attitude of the white man with the teaching which they received in the simplicity of the earlier days. These things are inevitable, and if the true converts have been well grounded by their spiritual guides, these adverse influences which come in afterwards may become a wholesome and a chastening discipline. Of course, many fall away under the testing process, and are pointed at with scorn by the very people who have been the occasion of this untoward result, as a proof of the futility of missions to the heathen. At the time with which we are now dealing, these troubles had not yet commenced in the Kuruman district, and the mission was in that stage which might well be called the spring-time. There was much brightness and hope.

A few months after my birth it became necessary for my mother to undertake a journey to the coast, partly for health reasons, and partly to make arrangements for the schooling of the elder children. My

father could not be spared from his work, so my mother had to undertake the journey alone. Fortunately, Mr. Hume, one of the traders already referred to, was going to Graham's Town, so she was provided with an able and a considerate escort. It was a journey of about five hundred miles, which in the ordinary rate of travelling with the ox-wagon would mean about five weeks. There were two considerable rivers to be tackled, the Vaal and the Orange. The former gave the travellers no difficulty, but when they came to the Orange River it was running high, and there were no means of crossing it. A round month was spent in patiently waiting for the great stream to run down low enough for the wagons to cross, but in vain. There was not a village or even a farmhouse anywhere in that part of the country, so the travellers had to be contented with camp life in their wagons. Meanwhile, however, a large party of Boers arrived, and it was found possible to take measures to expedite matters. Trees—of which, fortunately, there were plenty along the river banks—were cut down, a raft was built, and the task of ferrying over was commenced. Each wagon had to be unloaded and taken to pieces. The oxen had to swim. There were eighteen wagons, and it took three days' hard work. The river at this point was only eighty yards across, but very deep, and one can imagine the tremors of the mother with her four children, and the husband and father so far away and ignorant of all that was going on. The rough but kindly frontiersmen managed everything well, and there was not a single accident; and the large cavalcade dispersed and went on its several ways, well pleased with the mutual help they had been able to render.

The journey to Graham's Town and Port Elizabeth was duly accomplished. We paid a short interim visit to a place called the Kowie, now better known as Port Alfred, in connection with which an incident occurred which might be called an adventure, the first in my child life. On our way back to Graham's Town, over a somewhat mountainous road, the wagon capsized. The mother and two or three of the children managed to scramble out safely, being near the front of the wagon; but two of the party were found to be missing, the baby and his eldest sister, Mary. Mary, by the way, was the same who in process of time became the wife of David Livingstone. With

some difficulty the boxes and other lumber were drawn out of the wagon, and it was discovered that the baby and his sister, who had him in her arms, had got rolled up in the mattresses, which thus protected them from injury; and Mary, being of a sensible and placid disposition, had quietly waited until help came. This, of course, was a family tradition, and does not form part of my personal recollections, which for the first four years of my life, with the exception of one or two trifling incidents, is the blank that it usually is in the memory of most of us.

In 1839 my parents started on a journey to Cape Town. The state of my mother's health called for an entire change, but the main reason was that the translation of the Sechwana New Testament had been accomplished, and larger resources were needed for its printing than were available on the station. It turned out that things were no better in this respect in Cape Town, so the resolution was formed to go right on to England. Twenty-two years had passed since my father had landed in Cape Town; but that was not an element in the case. In those days, when travelling by land or by sea was so tedious and difficult, once a man had got out to the scene of his labours, he had to stay there as long as he could. In many instances missionaries never returned home at all, and even lost touch with all their own people. In their case it was truly a parting for life.

My memory does not serve me as to the journey from Kuruman to Cape Town, which took about two months, in the slow but sure ox-wagon. When it was decided to go on to England, a ship had to be waited for, and the first available was a comparatively small vessel carrying troops. Cape Town was suffering from a visitation of measles, so severe that even to-day it is remembered by old people; and we as a family did not escape; but well or ill there was nothing for it but to embark, as there was no knowing when another opportunity might occur. The disease was as rife on board as it was on shore. To make matters worse, the measles were followed by an epidemic of dysentery. Probably the water-supply was not what it might have been, either in quantity or in quality. It had to be brought on board in barrels, and stored in these same barrels until wanted, and to be used with a view to economy.

Shortly after we sailed, my sister Bessie, afterwards Mrs. Price, was born; and two days later my brother James,

two years older than myself, died. We were nearly all, including my father, ill; and my mother had to struggle through this difficult time almost unaided. There were several deaths on board. One of the first things I remember, when I was recovered sufficiently to be carried on deck, was a sailor sitting at work on a canvas shroud that was being prepared for another victim of the disease, a laddie about my own age, a son of one of the soldiers. It was three months before we found ourselves in the English Channel, and then the first thing we must needs do was to get grounded on a sandbank. Fortunately the weather was calm, and still more fortunately a steamer happened to pass, one of the most improbable things that could have happened, for seagoing steamers were then few and far between. It was a strange sight to me, indeed to most of the family, to see this curious-looking craft coming along, puffing a cloud of smoke out of her tall funnel; for that seemed to be the most prominent thing about her. The whole proceeding was weird and uncanny. The strange craft did us good service, however. She pulled us off the sandbank, and in process of time we reached London with no further mishap.

The next three years were a panorama of novelties. There was a good deal of travelling, sometimes by rail, but mostly in the old-fashioned stage coach. The London and Birmingham Railway had not long been completed, and there were still the echoes of the furious strife between the old landowners and their enemies the surveyors; the inevitable clash between feudalism and the new order. Even as a child I used to hear the excited discussions on topics of this kind, and used to wonder what it was all about. Most of our time as a family was spent in London, in what was then regarded as the quiet suburb of Walworth. The Surrey Gardens were then the great resort of the South Londoners, and one of our childish excitements, stolen when we were supposed to be in bed and asleep, was to watch from the upper windows of the house the display of fireworks in these gardens.

In process of time I was sent to a day school close to our temporary home. I think it must have been a sort of kindergarten, for the only thing that I can recollect about it is that we used to spend much of our time drawing upon slates whatever our fancy might suggest. Later

on I was sent to the School for the Sons of Missionaries at Walthamstow. It was then in its infancy as an institution. I think I must have been one of the earliest pupils. Very important consequences—to me—sprang out of this arrangement. The neighbourhood was low-lying and damp, the premises were old and not altogether suitable for the purposes of a boarding school; very different from the splendid home which the same school has now been provided with at Eltham. I caught a heavy cold, and at the end of the term went back to Walworth only to be laid up with a serious illness for many weary weeks. Medical treatment in those days was somewhat drastic. I carried for years afterwards on my chest marks left by various applications—mustard plasters, blisters, and finally leeches. When the more acute symptoms were past, I was left for several months without a voice, being unable to speak above a whisper; and I saw next to nothing of companions of my own age outside of the family. One thing stands out like a bright star during those sombre months. A kind lady friend brought me two books which were then quite new: *The Peep of Day*, and the *Line upon Line*. Possibly I may be partial in my judgment, but in all the wealth of literature for children which has since been poured out with lavish hands, these books have to me never been surpassed. They opened a new world to me, and made the Bible history a mine of wealth.

Another little vision, momentary as it was, remains like a cameo in the far past. The good Queen Victoria, sometime in 1840, shortly after her marriage, was to open Parliament. Some kind friend had provided us with a very advantageous place, and we had the opportunity for a close view of the royal pair as they were drawing near to the Houses of Parliament. It was a charming sight; the youthful couple, the girlish face of the Queen especially, radiant with excitement and beaming on the immense and vociferous crowds, was something to treasure in remembrance ever afterwards. I think she wore some sort of a tiara of white ostrich feathers; but this may have been an embellishment of my childish fancy.

One important result of the illness mentioned above was that, instead of being left in England for my schooling, it was decreed by the doctors that I must return to South Africa with my parents, and be allowed to 'run wild' for

three or four years. This was all very well, perhaps, from the juvenile point of view, but it meant a somewhat serious handicap on my education, which was already so backward.

In 1843 we sailed again for South Africa, in a vessel called the *Fortitude*. She was a smart and well-found craft, and made what was then considered a good passage of seventy-three days to the Cape. We took our departure from Gravesend on the 30th of January, but it was the 13th of December before we reached our home at Kuruman. People may wonder what we were doing all that time, seeing that the same distance can now be easily covered in thirty days. We were a large company, as there were with us two additional missionaries with their wives, a preparation for extension of the mission in Bechwanaland. This meant the collection of wagons with their teams of oxen, weeks and even months of waiting for belated ships with additional material for new stations and for the printing office at Kuruman, and also new editions of Sechwana Scriptures sent out by the Bible Society. For three months out of the time I was sent to the Government school in Port Elizabeth, then presided over by John Paterson, who afterwards became a considerable person in the political life of the Cape Colony.

We got away at last from Port Elizabeth, or rather from the mission station of Bethelsdorp in the same neighbourhood, with our long cavalcade of wagons, calling at Graaf Reinet, where we were hospitably entertained for some days by the venerable Mr. Murray and his wife; the parents of an illustrious family to the numerous members of which South Africa owes a debt of blessing that can never be computed by ordinary human standards. The best known of their children is Dr. Andrew Murray, old in years, but still strong in spirit.¹

When we were yet some days' journey from Kuruman, we were met by David Livingstone, who had been sent out a couple of years before, while my father was still in England. He came on horseback, and he found us on the banks of the Vaal River, waiting, as so often used to happen, for the water to run down sufficiently for us to cross. Livingstone was clad in a suit of his own making, which was strong and serviceable enough, though it might have

¹ Since deceased.—AUTHOR.

failed to pass muster in a shop window in Regent Street. This little circumstance was a specimen of the quiet self-reliance of the man who was eventually to spend so many toilsome years of his life grappling with difficulties which would have been too much for most of us.

CHAPTER III

BOYHOOD AT KURUMAN

“ THE next four years of my life passed in very much the sort of thing that had been prescribed by the doctor, though it would hardly have passed muster with our modern notions of education. There was no school available within reach, except that for the native children, in which I generally spent an hour or two under the oversight of the Rev. William Ashton, getting the rudiments of writing and arithmetic. For anything else in the way of education during that period I was indebted to my mother. She made a point of supervising my miscellaneous reading, always keeping before me her high ideal of attainment. I cannot adequately express my lifelong obligation to her for her wise guidance in the absence of the school discipline which is the lot of most boys at that stage in their lives.

My father led too busy and arduous a life to spare time for matters of this kind. Most of his time was spent in his study, wrestling with the difficulties attendant on the translation of the Scriptures and other books into a language which was in its literary infancy, which he himself had for the most part had the task of reducing to writing. When out of his study he had to be doctoring the sick, and then the garden or the workshop claimed his energies. In those days everyone had to be his own farmer, blacksmith, carpenter and builder. It was often my lot to take such a part as was possible in these activities for a youngster of my age. Many is the time that I had to blow the blacksmith's bellows, while my father made the sparks fly from the red or the white hot iron. Frequently I spent a good part of the day in what was called 'leading water,' carrying on what was absolutely necessary in that country, the irrigation of the garden and orchard. I had few playmates, except the native boys, but after all it was an interesting life for a lad.

An occasional break would come in the shape of a journey, always of course in the ox-wagon, then the only mode of conveyance. One of these journeys was a unique experience, far beyond the possibilities of to-day. David Livingstone had married my sister Mary, and they had settled on a secluded station some two hundred and fifty miles north-east from Kuruman. They were in need of some supplies and other succour. There was no other way of meeting the difficulty, my father's duties would not admit of his leaving the station just then, so my mother undertook the journey alone, taking me and my two younger sisters with her. The intervening country, of which long spaces were uninhabited, was infested with lions. My mother was fortunately able to avail herself of the escort of a native, who had his own wagon, and was going with a large hunting party on a trip. In those days any lady would feel perfectly safe in such company; but the other difficulty, the fear of wild beasts, was a real one. A few months earlier, one of my elder sisters had travelled the same road. She had with her a native maid and three wagon boys. One evening, just after they had outspanned, and she was sitting by the fire waiting for the kettle to boil, the oxen meanwhile grazing close by, a lion crept up and killed one of the oxen a few yards away. She and her maid fled to the wagon with the driver; the other two men were not on the spot, having gone back to look for something that had been dropped from the wagon, and they had taken with them the only available gun. The whole night was an anxious vigil, while they sat and listened to the lion tearing the flesh and cracking the bones of his victim. Fortunately he was alone, and at sunrise, having satisfied himself, he departed. There they were, stranded, the rest of the oxen having bolted they knew not whither, and there was nothing for it but to walk back to the native village, twenty miles away, from which they had started the previous day. They met the other two wagon boys before they had gone far. These had also encountered another lion, but they had fortunately been able to take refuge in a tree, where they had to spend the night. A circumstance of this kind naturally made my mother disinclined to take any risks. However, we had the full benefit of our numerous escort, and had no adventures of a disagreeable kind.

On the contrary, we children had the privilege of seeing what no man will ever now see again. That part of South Africa as it was then has been called, not inaptly, a hunter's paradise. We travelled, day after day, over wide grassy plains, with a moderate sprinkling of scattered forest, the pasture ground of innumerable game, from the tiny 'steenbok,' or, as the natives call it, the 'phuduhudu,' a dainty little antelope about the size of a fox terrier, up to the lordly eland, of which I have seen specimens that would rival a bullock in size and weight. So much for the antelopes, of which there were many varieties. Then there were the 'gnus,' or 'weldebeests,' nondescripts in the zoological category, which used to delight us with their peculiar antics and their ferocious menaces, ending by going off in a wild scamper till they were lost to sight in the distance. Very often in company with these were troops of zebras, which for no apparent reason seemed to court their company. Farther on, and near the Ngotwane and the Crocodile Rivers, we found ourselves among the buffaloes. These used to make clumsy approaches to our bullocks when they were grazing, somewhat to the perturbation of the latter. Fortunately, unless he is wounded, the buffalo is not a malicious animal.

The rhinoceros is not so often seen, but we had a little experience of them here and there. At one place, near to what is now the town of Vryburg, we had encamped on the Saturday evening for the Sunday rest near to a nice pool of water. In the morning we made the unpleasant discovery that a rhinoceros had been there and had been rolling in our precious store until he had reduced it to a mere mudbath. He did not give us any further opportunity of acquaintance with him, or it would have been bad for his health. We did not get quite so far as the elephant country; but a few miles north of what is now Mafeking we saw a stately procession, in single file, of nineteen giraffes, wending their way among the camelthorn trees. On the Ngotwane River, as we neared our destination at David Livingstone's station, a herd of at least one hundred and fifty buffaloes galloped across in front of our wagon, with a thunder like that of a railway train. We had no lion adventures, though we were often serenaded from afar as we sat round the camp fires at night. All that country is now traversed by the railway from Cape Town, which has

its present terminus at Elizabethville in the Congo State, a distance of more than two thousand miles. There is very little game of any sort to be seen now, and hunters must go far and wide to find it.

It took us three weeks to accomplish the journey from Kuruman to Chonwane, where Livingstone then had his station; and in that time we must have seen altogether some thousand head of game of the kinds I have mentioned. On our return journey we passed within sight of the spot where, not ten years before, the American missionaries had commenced operations among the Matabele, under their chief Moselekatse, the father of the late Lobengula. Their work had been cut short by the onward movement of the Emigrant Boers, who drove the Matabele farther northwards and carried the missionaries away with them on their return to their headquarters at or near the present Potchefstrom. There was nothing left at the station but the ruins of the house and a lonely grave, that of Mrs. Wilson.

We reached our home at Kuruman in due time. With the exception of this and one or two shorter journeys, when I was privileged to accompany my father on his evangelistic visits to outlying parts of the district, my life during this period was quiet and uneventful enough, yet not without its interest. The work of the mission was in a stage of steady prosperity. There were few, if any, of the adverse influences which came later on, which must come in some form or other in the work of carrying on the Heavenly Kingdom. The few European visitors we had were mostly of a sort to command the respect of the natives, men like Messrs. Oswell and Murray, Major Vardon and Mr. Methuen—men drawn to that region by the love of sport. Of these men the one who stood foremost in my boyish admiration was William Oswell, who has always remained to me the ideal of the perfect English gentleman, whose refinement was well matched with his fearless prowess as a hunter. He had been in the East Indian civil service, and came to South Africa as a health resort in the first instance; but becoming fascinated with the 'call of the wild,' he repeated his visits. He was a great help to David Livingstone in his earlier exploratory journeys, finding in him a congenial spirit. Mr. Oswell and men of that class did a great deal in those days to secure the confidence and

respect of the natives for Englishmen, and indirectly to help on missionary work.

In 1847 the inevitable question forced itself upon the attention of my parents, that of sending the remaining children to school. My two younger sisters and I must go. It meant a long separation in those days of ox-wagon journeys, and tedious voyages in sailing ships. My father was still too hard at work to be able to leave the station for any length of time; so there was nothing for it but for my mother to do what she could. We set out in the usual way with our native servants, who in my own experience, and in that of most missionaries, proved themselves absolutely reliable as far as good intentions went, though they might sometimes lose their heads in sheer bewilderment under new and untried conditions. It took us just two months to cover the distance of seven hundred and fifty miles between Kuruman and Cape Town, and that was considered fair travelling.

We passed through Griqua Town, then a flourishing missionary station under the care of the Rev. Edward Solomon. Mr. Solomon afterwards took up work in the Cape Colony, gathered and ministered to a European congregation in Bedford for many years. He has long passed to his rest, but has left a family noted for its distinguished influence in South Africa. His brother, Saul Solomon, is a man who has left his mark upon the Cape Colony. In spite of serious drawbacks physically, such as would have taken all the spirit out of most men, he held his own in public life. He was a leader in Parliament, and his power was all the more marked from the fact that in one respect he stood for what was then an unpopular cause. He was a steadfast friend of the natives, who at that time had not the influential advocates that they have now. This is a digression. To return to our journey.

We crossed the Orange River at a place then known as English Drift, some distance below the junction of that river with the Vaal. The river was broad and the stream was strong, but we had the willing and able assistance of the Griquas who lived on the spot, and were part of Mr. Solomon's congregation. For some days after leaving the Orange River we were travelling through an uninhabited country, with here and there a herd of springboks. It was with some curiosity that we approached the first sign

of human habitation. I have forgotten the name of the farmer, but I have an impression that it was Westerhuisen. He was a typical specimen of the 'voortrekker,' who, like most of his class, was friendly enough to passing travellers, but rough and primitive in manners, his children growing up in a state of abysmal ignorance of the great world beyond their horizon. Some days after passing this place we came to a small hamlet now known as Victoria West, and later on we reached Beaufort West, which had attained quite a respectable age, and for a long time had been the frontier town in that direction. It was the centre of an immense parish of the Dutch Reformed Church under the ministerial charge of the Rev. Colin Fraser.

From Beaufort it took us about a fortnight to cross the Karroo, a desolate-looking region, with a lonely farm homestead here and there. Our long-suffering oxen, accustomed as they were to the grassy plains of Bechwanaland, had to prolong their existence as best they could on a sort of miserable scrub, and it was just a question how long they would hold out on such fare. Strange to say, the stock reared on this sort of pasture seemed to be able not merely to live, but even to thrive. I suppose it was a case of the survival of the fittest. Here and there, in more favoured spots, there would be a small spring, of which the water was often brackish, but not too much so to admit of its being used for the irrigation of a small patch of ground and the production of vegetables and fruit. The one break in the monotony of the life led by these wilderness dwellers was the visit to the nearest 'dorp,' perhaps fifty miles away, for the quarterly 'nachtmaal,' or communion service. There was a religious strain in the lives of these people, though, as might be expected, there was a dogged narrowness of outlook; but take them all in all, they were people not to be despised. That was sixty or seventy years ago. All is changed now. The country is traversed by railways; deep boring and windmill pumps have brought a better supply of water, and there are schools everywhere. At its best, however, it is difficult to know what use such a region as the Karroo is to the world; unless it should one day prove that there is mineral wealth below the surface sufficient to provide for a change such as we have seen in other places once equally unpromising. I shall not soon forget the close of our pilgrimage through

this weary land; there was something almost dramatic about it. We were approaching the top of the Hex River Mountain, on the brow of the great tableland of which the whole central part of South Africa consists.

The farmers along the road had given our inexperienced servants elaborate and somewhat alarming cautions, and had described graphically the difficulties and dangers of the rough wagon track by which we were to descend; so that it was with quaking hearts that we inspanned early one afternoon and started. None of us, old or young, had much time or thought to give to the grand and stern mountain scenery around; our one thought was to watch the wagon jolting round the sharp turns, slipping over rocky edges, and at times overhanging dizzy precipices. It was dusk before we reached the bottom of the mountain road, and found some level ground suitable for our night's bivouac, and we were thankful to be able to settle in, tired but happy; none more so than the mother, who, after all, had been the mainstay of the party; for our servants were, in work of this kind, little better than ourselves, the children.

But the great enchantment was yet to come next morning, as we youngsters crept out of the wagon. The whole thing was a transformation scene. The quiet brooklet fringed with arums and other flowers all new to us, the cooing of the turtle doves, the one or two homesteads in the distance, embosomed in their groves, every sight and sound appealed to our delight after those weeks of pilgrimage over a cheerless and barren land, and left an impression that can never be effaced. From that point onwards our road led through a land of cornfields and vineyards, with the quaint and picturesque old Dutch houses, with their thatched roofs and gleaming white walls, nestling among the oak-trees. It all seemed like another world. At that time there were only three farms in the Hex River valley, two of them occupied by brothers of the name of De Vos, and the third by a Jourdaan. By all these we were received and welcomed as if we had been old friends. They were a different class from the rough though kindly Boers of the Back Country. There was a stamp of refinement in which it was possible to trace the old French Huguenot influence.

We left our tired and footsore oxen with one of these

farmers, and hired a fresh span with their driver to take us on to Cape Town, which was still a hundred miles away. All was now comparatively easy, with good roads and a driver with local knowledge. The last twelve miles of the journey was across the Cape Flats, then an almost uninhabited waste of white sand, across which the main road had been made, a sort of causeway of red ironstone. The whole of the flats was a treeless waste, slightly covered with a scanty scrub, which was hardly sufficient to keep the loose sand from drifting like snow. Even the main road had at times to be cleared of the accumulated sand at certain points. To-day all is different, very much owing to the extensive planting of Australian wattles and Port Jackson willows. The drift has been stopped, and all along the railway line, which follows the same course as the old wagon road, villages are springing into existence, showing how much can be done by well-directed effort to turn even a wilderness into a garden. On another part of these same flats a number of German immigrants were settled many years ago, who by their indomitable industry have contrived to make at least a comfortable living on what at one time seemed a hopeless waste.

In due time we found ourselves at the end of our long journey, safely established in Claremont, where by the care of an old and faithful friend, J. T. Mathew, accommodation had been provided for us. This was in the beginning of October 1847. The house in which we had rooms is still standing, and looks but little the worse for wear to-day. Claremont is about six miles out of Cape Town, and is one of the long line of suburbs which now extend almost continuously from Cape Town to Simon's Town. Curving round the base of the majestic Table Mountain group, these suburbs may, in the estimation of an old-fashioned inhabitant, be regarded as giving the Cape Peninsula a charm all its own, with its almost endless groves and shady avenues. One of the loveliest spots is the garden of the late H. M. Arderne, of which in the course of my lifetime I have watched the growth, from the time when his father first commenced it on a hillside then covered by rough and unattractive bush. In those days, however, there were considerable intervals of open and unoccupied ground, dividing up these suburbs into several small and detached villages. The only public conveyances were two omni-

buses, which used to make the return journey between Wynberg and Cape Town once a day. Many people depended on their own conveyances, but it could only have been a few score people who were in the habit of making a daily visitation to the town.

So slowly did events move that my mother had to remain five months at the Cape before she could complete the necessary arrangements for us. Eventually my sisters were sent to England, under the care of the Rev. J. Crombie Brown, and I was put to school in Cape Town. Early in March my mother started on her long return to Kuruman, on this occasion quite alone with her native servants. I accompanied her about forty miles on her way. On the last evening, one of the most memorable in my life, at a place called Yosfat's Daal, near the present village of Wellington, under the brows of the Groote Drakenstein, purple in the sunlight, we took our last farewell until we should meet again, more than ten years later. She went away for her lonely two months' journey, and I went back—a lad of thirteen—to the school in Cape Town.

CHAPTER IV

SCHOOLDAYS AT CAPE TOWN

“THE next two years were spent in what might be called figuratively school life. Education in South Africa was in its elementary stage. There were three schools in Cape Town. One was the germ of the South African College. Another was a Dutch school kept by Mr. Changuion. The third, at which I was placed, was a private school which provided for boarders. There were a couple of schools in the suburbs, and that was about all the public provision there was for the secondary education of European boys. I cannot speak for the other schools; but that in which my lot was cast did not seem to have any regular standard or course of training. The boys, of course, brought with them to school the rudiments, that is, reading, writing, and arithmetic; but in the matter of classics and mathematics the system pursued was peculiar. At the close of two years I had not reached the end of the first book of Euclid, or the middle of the first book of Virgil's *Aeneid*; and these had been the main subjects of study. I had made fair progress in pencil drawing under Mr. Bowler. Otherwise my mental culture at this time was very largely in my own reading, and a very queer kind of reading at that.

My time out of school, and that of three or four other boarders, who, like me, had come from distant parts of the country, was largely passed in roving up and down the mountain sides or over to Camp's Bay, where there was comparative solitude, with one farmhouse. We also took an intense interest in the shipping, which at that time consisted mainly of sailing vessels. We could have passed a fairly stiff examination on the minutiae of every kind of craft that anchored in Table Bay. We could read the flags that were displayed on Signal Hill; and, having

obtained a copy of the code and shipping list, we got to know the name of every vessel before she came to anchor in the Bay. There were two British regiments quartered in Cape Town, and their occasional reviews on the parade were occasions of lively interest, especially when Sir Harry Smith, the Governor, was to the fore. He was a soldier through and through; a man greatly popular, for he had a generous nature; but he retained some of the manners of the pre-Victorian age. There was something of uncommon interest to us as boys when Sir Harry was conducting a review. With his stentorian voice there would be heard language so tropical that it would make our hair curl in these modern days, but people then took it as a matter of course. It was just Sir Harry's little way.

Upon the whole we boys got a good deal of fun out of life, which in our course was mostly spent out of doors; school and classes being looked upon as merely a disagreeable detail, to be kept out of sight and thought as much as possible. There was an almost entire absence of athletic games. Football was unknown; there was one attempt at a cricket club, which used to meet on the Green Point common; but it was not always easy to get up an eleven, let alone any other club against which to play, so the thing lacked life and energy. There was some swimming from off the Woodstock beach; but upon the whole the life of town lads was not invigorating, or tending to manly development. In the country it was a little better. There was riding and shooting, but these things did not come much in my way.

During those two and a half years of my school life, there was one episode of a public character which may be regarded as having been of almost national importance to South Africa, though next to no attention in the Homeland. This was known as the anti-convict agitation. At this time the transportation of convicts from the Old Country to some of the colonies was a part of the accepted penal system. It was in full force in Bermuda, in Van Dieman's Land, and in New South Wales. Early in 1849 the disquieting news was received at the Cape that there was an intention on the part of the Colonial Office to extend the system in a modified form to the Cape Colony. We had not as yet, at that time, obtained our own parliamentary government, and we were virtually left without a voice in

the matter. On the 21st of March the news came that the determination had been arrived at to send a number of convicts who had served a part of their time in Bermuda to the Cape. These men were to be treated on what was termed the 'ticket-of-leave' system. They were to be chosen on the ground of good behaviour, to be landed at the Cape, and permitted to seek employment on their own account, though remaining provisionally under the observation of the police authorities.

The news of this proposal excited widespread consternation. It was felt that in a country like South Africa, with its lonely homesteads scattered over a vast extent of country, and in a community so far law-abiding that it needed only a minute proportion of police force, the presence of a number of people whose antecedents at all events were so unfavourable, roaming at will, far and wide, and under great temptation to lawlessness, was a contingency not to be calmly faced. There was also to be considered the stigma which it was felt might justly or unjustly attach itself to the whole community into which it was proposed to intrude this new element. Then, again, there was the perennial difficulty, the native question. The past history of the country was not without warning instances of the way in which lawless men, fugitives from justice in the Colony itself, had gone amongst the native tribes beyond the Frontier, and had wrought abundant mischief. It was seen, too, that this unobtrusive experiment would be only the beginning of a system which would soon expand and convert the Colony into a mere penal settlement.

The only way within our reach to meet the difficulty was to appeal to the Colonial Office through the Governor. Sir Harry Smith found himself in a most difficult position. He could give no assurances until he should receive some reply from home to his representations, and meanwhile the agitation and alarm were growing week by week, and spreading through the whole country. There was no cable communication, indeed no means of conveying the barest news except by an occasional sailing ship. The average length of a passage to England was upwards of two months: and the position was increasing in urgency, especially when the alarming news arrived that a vessel had actually been chartered and was on her way to Bermuda to carry out the orders of the Colonial Office. A

committee sprang into existence, consisting not of noisy and irresponsible agitators, but of men weighty in character, honoured by all classes, some of them with large property and business interests. Every class of the community felt the gravity of the crisis. Public meetings were held—not in any hall, because there was none large enough to accommodate the eager and excited throngs of all sorts and conditions of men. To us as schoolboys it became a matter as exhilarating as could be conceived to be allowed to feel that we also were budding patriots. The meetings were held on the vacant space now occupied by the General Post Office, and in front of the long, low, one-story buildings which housed at that time the Public Library and the Commercial Exchange.

At one of these meetings, in the month of July, we stood for hours in a continuous rain, and nearly over our ankles in slush, listening to and cheering with inextinguishable ardour the eloquence of our city fathers. Resolutions were passed, urging upon the Governor and through him the Colonial Office at home to recognise the seriousness of the position; but there was the depressing afterthought that months must pass before we could make our voices heard in the far-away land across the sea. Meanwhile it was resolved to take practical action on the spot. A solemn pledge was drawn up that the whole of the mercantile community should bind itself to have no dealings in the way of supplying food or other necessaries to government officials or to the military or naval forces when once the dreaded convict ship should appear. The Governor had made the only concession in his power. It was not much, but it served under the circumstances to relieve the extreme tension. He promised that on the arrival of the ship *Neptune*, the convicts should not be landed until such time as a definite reply had been received from England to the representations he had made.

In September the ship arrived and cast anchor in Simon's Bay. This was a wise measure on the part of the authorities. The presence of the vessel in Table Bay, in full view of the town, would have been a source of dangerous irritation. As it was her arrival made a profound impression. The Pledge was almost universally observed, so much so as seriously to embarrass those who were affected. It was a striking spectacle to see all the shops closed, only a side

door open, and admittance given only to customers who were known to be on the popular side. Contracts with the Government were broken, in one case at least at the cost of financial ruin to the patriot, who forfeited not only the most important branch of his business, but had to pay heavy penalties for breach of contract. Four or five individuals failed to stand the test and isolated themselves from the rest of the community; but upon the whole the Pledge was so observed that things were getting very difficult for the Government. Few people but those who were living then can understand what a strain there was on public feeling. Happily, there was next to nothing in the way of outrage or violence.

Only one untoward incident occurred which roused some bitter feeling. A nocturnal attack was made by hired roughs upon Mr. John Fairbairn, which might have had serious results but for the splendid courage of one of the servants. Mr. Fairbairn, as the editor of the *Commercial Advertiser*, had taken a leading part in showing up the conduct of those who, in his opinion, had betrayed the popular cause by not observing the terms of the Pledge. With this one exception the law-abiding conduct of the community was a remarkable testimony to the wisdom of the men who led the anti-convict movement. A sense of gloom oppressed the whole community. But for the personal regard which was felt for the Governor, and the tact with which he met the popular outcry and carefully avoided any offensive move, we would have been on the verge of rebellion and civil war.

Here and there a little streak of humour crossed the darkness. Cape Town had two or three days of quiet amusement over an occasional incident of which I give the following as a sample. The operation of the Pledge rather taxed the inventive genius of the *chef* in the castle upon whom rested the burden of providing the officers' mess. There was a certain adjutant of the forces, a man of family, for his people figured in Debrett's Peerage. One evening, crossing the parade, he became aware of a certain man carrying a basket with a promising look about it. He, by force or guile—probably the latter, for he was a pleasant fellow—managed to ascertain that the basket contained beefsteaks! Before the astonished bearer knew what had happened the beefsteaks had changed hands,

the basket was empty, and the adjutant was making a bee-line to the castle. Probably he had been a football player, for he could sprint to some purpose; and though followed by a batch of pursuers in full cry, who had witnessed the incident, he made good his retreat and reached the gate. Here the chase had to stop, for there was no entrance but by permission of the armed sentry. The officer, having safely bestowed the proceeds of his raid, returned to the gate and blandly offered to fight anyone in the assembled crowd who would accept the challenge; but no one did.

There came at last one bit of good news that had a marvellous effect on the public mind. It was that one member of the British Parliament had taken up the cause of the almost despairing colonists with such ardour and perseverance as eventually contributed largely to the saving of their cause. For this he had the gratitude of many thousands of people with whom he had no personal acquaintance or any material interests. Probably many people do not know to-day what is the reason of the name that has been given to the principal street in the mother-town of South Africa. But those who know the name of Charles Adderley as their helper in a time of sore need can never forget the gallant and disinterested fight that he waged for a colony at that time but little known, and apt to be regarded as a somewhat troublesome adjunct to the British dominions. We had no gold and diamonds then to make us of any importance or value to those with whom such things count.

At last the joyful tidings came; the dispatch from the Colonial Office arrived, with the orders that the *Neptune* was to weigh anchor with all hands on board, and to proceed to one of the Eastern colonies. The enthusiasm of the whole community was unbounded. Cape Town had its illumination; a really striking display, considering the very elementary means available. There was a feeling of genuine pity for the unfortunate convicts, and almost equally unfortunate crew, who for five weary months had been prisoners, contemplating the shores on which they had not been permitted to set foot. A very considerable subscription was raised, the amount to be distributed among the convicts on their arrival at their destination which would help them to feel that against them personally

at least there was no ill feeling. This episode in Cape history was the beginning of a new era. In another twelve months the problem of providing the rudiments of representative government for the Cape Colony was taken in hand.

CHAPTER V

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE DAYS IN ENGLAND

“ AFTER two years of school life at the Cape, a new prospect opened. It was decided that I should go to England, and be placed under the care of a friend of my father, the Rev. J. Collingwood Bruce, who had a school in Newcastle-on-Tyne. As things are now it would have been a very simple affair for me to have taken a run up-country, to have a parting look at my parents and home at Kuruman; but in those days it was not to be thought of. The difficulties of transit and expense were insurmountable. Some old friends of the family were going to England, and a passage was taken in the good ship *Agincourt*, one of the sailing vessels in the East India trade, which used to make an annual trip, there and back, between London and Calcutta or Bombay. We left Table Bay on the 21st of March, 1850, and made a good average passage of sixty days to London. There were not more than thirty or forty passengers, all told. A few of these were from the East Indies; but the majority were from the Cape. The former kept very much to themselves; they seemed to regard ‘Cape people’ as of a somewhat lower social grade; but we managed to have a very good time all the same.

People to-day may wonder how we managed to possess our souls in patience. There is, however, a good deal of incident and variety in a voyage by a sailing ship which is wanting in a steamer. In the Equatorial belt we would be at times becalmed for a day or two, and then everybody whose tastes lay that way would be busy fishing. A ripple of excitement would be caused by the hooking and hauling on board of a shark. The working of the ship against adverse winds, and the daily observations and the marking of the chart of our course, were matters of interest freely discussed with the officers. There was no provision for

baths, and there was a very moderate allowance of water for washing purposes dealt out before breakfast to each cabin. If a man wanted anything more he could go up when the decks were being washed and have the hose turned on to him as he stood in the open. We carried our sheep and pigs for slaughter purposes, and also a couple of cows for milk. Once or twice we met and 'spoke' with other ships when we managed to pass near enough for the use of the speaking trumpet. On one occasion we 'lay to,' and a boat was sent across from one ship to the other; and there was a small exchange of civilities in a practical form. I forget what was our contribution; but we received in return a bundle of old newspapers and a sack of potatoes, both of which were made good use of. The newspapers were passed from hand to hand, and read by pretty well everybody in the ship. I only remember one item of public intelligence, and that was that Adelaide the Queen Dowager had died. Her death had taken place early in December, and we received the news in April 1850, about five months later.

In due time we found ourselves safely moored in the East India Docks. After a few days with my sisters in and about London, I was sent on to school. I found myself at once in what was in more senses than one a breezy atmosphere. There were a hundred and fifty boys, thirty of whom were boarders. After lunch with Dr. Bruce and his family, I was handed over to the guidance of one or two boys, and under their convoy found myself launched upon a sea full of new sensations. It was a little bit startling to be suddenly accosted by one gaunt Northumbrian with the query, 'Can you foight?' I was not exactly prepared with an answer, but resorted to that which is popularly supposed to be characteristic of a Scot, by asking a counter-question, as to what we were to fight about. The lads were all North Country, and mostly of a somewhat pugnacious breed, but there was a strong sense of truthfulness. If a boy reinforced a statement with the words 'upon my honour,' you might stake your life upon the truth of what he had been saying. As regards my position as a scholar, I found myself in a rather curious position. I was a well-grown boy for the age of fifteen, but my education in classics and mathematics was so backward that the Doctor, after putting me through a

preliminary examination, was perplexed to know what to do with me ; for he did not like to put me in a class of boys of half my age and size ; so he came to the decision to set me to work by myself for a time, though under the inspection of the masters in whose particular subjects I was backward. This gave me a strong motive for exertion, and by the beginning of the next half-year I was able to take a respectable position in the school.

I shall never cease to be thankful for the two years spent at Percy Street Academy, as the school was called. The headmaster and proprietor was a man of exceptional qualities, with a deep sense of spiritual responsibility to his pupils. I feel sure that his personal influence had a large share in moulding the lives of many of us. After his death, the school, having passed into less able hands, eventually closed ; but up to quite a recent time there was an annual dinner of 'Old Boys,' who cherished the memory of 'the good doctor.' I have special reason to reverence his memory for his kindness to me, and for the fact that I owe it to him that the defects of my earlier school course were in some measure made up for under his wise guidance during the two years I spent with him. There was a weekly lesson on Saturday mornings for the upper class. The subject was generally described as chemistry, but with a wide range over the field of general science. I am inclined to think that what I learned in that class has through my life been of more practical use to me than all the rest of my schooling put together. Dr. Bruce was an all-round man. He was an enthusiastic student of archæology, and his work on the Roman Wall between the Tyne and the Solway Firth is the classic on the subject.

As the time drew near for the close of my school life, he, knowing that my inclination lay in the direction of a missionary life, had a strong desire that I should take up the study of medicine ; and he had arranged a course for me that would have given me a very advantageous start. Dr. Bruce understood this matter better than some others. The value of thorough medical training as a qualification for missionary work was not recognised then as it is now. Unfortunately those who had the direction of my line of study did not see eye to eye with Dr. Bruce in this matter. My parents were too far away to be consulted. I had offered myself to the directors of the London Missionary

Society. In accordance with their arrangements, I was sent for a year's preliminary preparation to the Rev. John Jukes, of Bedford. It was in many ways a useful kind of training. One of the duties of the students, of whom there were four or five, was to go out on Sunday afternoons and evenings, and to hold services at village stations from two to seven miles from the town. I do not know how far these services may have been conducive to the spiritual edification of the hearers, but I do know that the reflex influence upon ourselves was a thing to be looked back upon with real thankfulness. We were brought into contact with a number of kindly people who, rustics as they were, taught us useful lessons of true Christian nobility. Perhaps it is hardly sufficiently appreciated that in the rural life of the Old Country, among the cottagers who tend the flocks and till the fields, there is a vein of simple piety which is an important element in the national life.

On the 26th of September 1852 I preached my first sermon, in the old Market House on the green in the village of Elstow, a place round which hover memories of John Bunyan. Changes have taken place, and probably much has been swept away, but Bunyan Meeting in the town of Bedford is, I believe, still going strong, and is a practical illustration of the fact that there is no valid reason why Baptists and Congregationalists should not thrive under some form of at least federal union. The spirit of the immortal dreamer seems to brood over the life of the church in Bunyan Meeting, and I have never lost the sense of that presence in my own life. Almost side by side with the old 'meeting' stood another 'chapel,' as we were contented to call our churches in those days, identified with the name and memory of John Howard, the well-known prison philanthropist and reformer. The pastor, the Rev. William Alliot, took a share with Mr. Jukes in the direction of our studies. He was a man full of genial humour, albeit a first-rate classical scholar. Altogether the year spent in Bedford was a time good to think of.

In 1853 I was duly entered as a student at Cheshunt College. It was then still in the quiet village in Hertfordshire from which it took its name. There were fine grounds through which the New River pursued its tranquil course. Since then the college has been transferred to Cambridge,

in favour of which change there is no doubt much to be said. The course was not very elaborate, and there was room for the considerable advance which has taken place later. There was a range of village preaching stations, similar to those at Bedford. Troubles arose between the students and one of the professors; there was a good deal of disorganisation, and at my own request I was transferred to New College, St. John's Wood, London. Here I spent another two years in the theological course. The death of the Principal, Dr. John Harris, somewhat dislocated the course of study for a time, but this in itself would not have mattered so much had it not unfortunately happened that I was debarred from completing the full course by an intimation from the directors of the London Missionary Society that I must hold myself in readiness to leave for South Africa at the close of the session in June 1857. As it happened, however, a long interval elapsed, and it was not till April of the following year that I was able to set sail.

Owing to the interest that was taken in the matter by some personal friends in Brighton, where I was staying, I was allowed to attend at the outpatient department of the Sussex County Hospital, and to pick up a few scraps of surgical knowledge, under the oversight of Dr. Jowers, then the house surgeon; but these were too casual and fragmentary to be of much use, and all that could be said about them was that they were better than nothing. In looking back upon the whole course of my collegiate training, it presents the appearance of a curious piece of patchwork. I must not complain, however, for so far as friends were concerned, I was surrounded with kindness and with good intentions, the drawback being that there was no one in particular who, in the absence of my parents, so far away as to be practically inaccessible, was personally responsible for the systematic regulation of my educational course. I am sensible, too, of my own shortcomings, and feel that many a young man would have made better use of his opportunities.

One thing, however, I can look back to with unalloyed satisfaction. I had made the acquaintance of a lady—Emily, the daughter of J. S. Unwin, of Brighton—and after a time I had persuaded her to give her consent to be my companion in the life to which I was looking forward.



The Studio, Wynberg.
JOHN SMITH MOFFAT, 1858.



The Studio, Wynberg.
EMILY UNWIN, ABOUT 1857.

Perhaps nothing in all my life can rank in equal importance to me with this happy result. We were privileged to spend forty-four years together as comrades and fellow-counsellors in the work of the Master. More than this I will not say here. My readers will understand that the subject is too sacred to be enlarged upon beyond the circle of our own family and intimate friends.

In looking back on those eight years spent in England, I am oppressed with a sense of the transitoriness of life, and the passing away almost completely of the older generation. Among the leading Congregational ministers of that day whom I used to hear occasionally were Dr. Raffles of Liverpool, Richard Fletcher of Manchester, Thomas Binney of the Weigh House Chapel, London, Henry Allon of Islington, John Stoughton of Kensington, Newman Hall of Southwark, and Joseph Sortain of Brighton. There were, of course, many others with whose preaching I was less familiar. My pastor at Newcastle was Guinness Rogers, afterwards more widely known through his work at Clapham.

My grandfather on the maternal side was still living. He was infirm in body, but retained a clear memory and took a deep interest in public affairs. I used to spend some of my vacations with him. He was born in 1763, at Little Dunkeld, near Perth. It has been one of the lasting regrets of my life that I did not embrace the opportunity of getting from him some reminiscences of his early life. One Christmas time I well remember. He was greatly excited over a lively little episode which brought back to him the old days. A case was being tried in London which involved the question of the right-of-way through Glen Tilt in the Highlands. The Duke of Atholl of that day had closed the Glen against public access, because the thoroughfare interfered with his game preserves. Two Oxford students, who were in the habit of spending a part of their vacation time in pedestrian tours through the Highlands, found their progress barred by the ducal edict. They resented this, and climbing the barriers that had been put up, pursued their way through the Glen. Fortunately, or unfortunately as the case may be, they met the Duke himself. He peremptorily ordered them to turn back. They refused to do so and claimed the right-of-way. The Duke started to try conclusions by physical force.

He soon found his mistake, for the man he tackled was an accomplished boxer, who soon put him out of action, and, sad humiliation, he had to own himself beaten on his native heath. His conqueror, before resuming his walk, handed the Duke his card, intimating where he was to be found if his presence should be desired. The result was an action for assault, which I believe failed, as the Duke had to confess to having struck the first blow.

The collateral question as to the right-of-way through Glen Tilt had been raised, but I think led to no result; and Glen Tilt, like so many other fair spots in the Highlands, was barred to all plebeian intruders for the sake of aristocratic sport. My grandfather got greatly excited over this business. He was then eighty-nine years old, but I remember his standing up with fire in his eyes, and recalling the fact that seventy years before he had been in the habit of driving down cattle from the Highlands through this very Glen Tilt, as a great public thoroughfare. He was a staunch Nonconformist. His grandfather, if not his father, had known what it was to be hunted on the mountains and over the moors on account of his faith as a Covenanter.

A year later than the incident referred to above, I was called to stand by his graveside as the only representative of his race within reach. A few faithful friends from Manchester were present, including two ministers who had been his valued pastors and friends, but as the law then stood they had to be silent onlookers, while the burial service was conducted by the rector of the parish. Another reminiscence of those days, though of a widely different character, occurs to me. I once took in my head to walk round London, keeping as far as possible in the belt where town merged into country. It took me the whole day, and the computed distance was about twenty miles. The circuit would have to be very much larger to-day.

I used also to visit my relatives in Scotland in vacation times. My father's mother—who had been a widow for some years—was living with two of my uncles in a very quiet way in the village of Inverkeithing. Their cottage is still standing, but has passed into other hands. My grandmother was a typical specimen of the old Scottish dame, with a dignity all her own. She might have suggested to George Macdonald the character so full of stern-

ness and yet tender affection depicted by him in the pages of *Robert Falconer*. She inspired me with a certain amount of awe in her unbending sense of duty, but there was too much love with it all to leave any impression but one of the deepest affection and reverence. I am inclined to think that justice is not always done to our 'forbears' who had these strong characteristics. We owe more to them than we are sometimes inclined to think.

My expeditions to Scotland were usually by sea. As my means would only allow me to be a third-class traveller, I should have had to go by what was known as the Parliamentary train, which was bound by regulation to call at every station between London and Edinburgh, and used to take practically a day and a night. The third-class carriages were comfortless in the extreme, and not even weather-tight. I have known on a wet day the rain dripping in upon us from the roof, and we sat crowded together and unable to shift our seats. Being a good sailor I preferred the sea route. There were at that time steamers running between London and Leith. The conditions on board these boats were fairly good, even in the second-class: except in one instance in my experience. It was in the year 1851. There were many people going up to London to see the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park. At the same time there was a rush of emigration on account of the gold discoveries in California. Embarking at Leith on my return to London, I found that there were about twice as many passengers as could be furnished with sleeping accommodation. The plan was adopted of giving a half-night in the berths. As many as could get room went to bed, not undressed, or only partially so. The berths were not in separate cabins, but faced into the saloon. The remaining passengers disposed of themselves as best they could. I lay down on the floor under the saloon table. At midnight there was a general change over. Those in the berths had to turn out and make room for the other shift. The steward assigned me a berth out of which a somewhat frowsy old dame had just turned. I suppose my looks must have betrayed my thoughts. I was thinking whether clean sheets at all events might be attainable. 'Hoots, man!' shouted the steward. 'What ails ye? Jump in quick! Are ye no thankfu' to get a bed ready warmed for ye?' I returned to my place on the floor

under the table. On more recent visits to the old country, I have been impressed with the fact that there is a far greater amount of consideration for the classes whose purses are slender. It seems, for instance, as if one can now travel by rail with just as much comfort in the second or third class as in the first, and in company at all events good-tempered and sociable.

It was during my two years at New College that what was known as the 'Rivulet Controversy' raged. A small book of poems with that unpretending title had been published by the Rev. T. T. Lynch, a little-known minister in London. The editor of the denominational weekly scented heresy, and tried to demolish the book with sledge-hammer blows. I say advisedly tried, for the manifest result of his thundering denunciations was to bring into prominence the gentle and unassuming man and his little book, of which nine out of ten of us had till then never heard, and to produce a reaction in favour of its writer personally. Some of his utterances had a tinge of novelty hardly consistent with the rigid theological standard then in vogue. There were some stormy meetings of the Congregational Union, and strong words were used. Lynch found powerful advocates, some of whom, it may be, would hardly express their theological views in exactly the same terms, but could see the deep spirituality and genuine love of truth which appealed to their brotherly feelings. There was nothing more to be done or even said, according to Congregational principles, as long as his own people stood by him. There was no church court or external authority that could touch the matter. The storm subsided, and in the calm that followed Lynch continued to pursue his unobtrusive course much as before. His name lives amongst us still, and will, I believe, continue to do so, as the author of some of the sweetest hymns in the English language, several of which have a place in our denominational hymn-book to-day.

About the same time another star appeared on a wider ecclesiastical horizon, of a very different type—one which, as the lapse of a whole generation has proved, was destined to exercise a masterful influence over a large and important province in the religious life of England. Charles Spurgeon had come into notice as a rising Baptist minister in the South of London. His growing power as a preacher drew

to him the attention of even the secular Press. The *London Times* took a leading part in the discussion. The somewhat supercilious and critical tone of comment only increased the crowds of all and sundry who were seeking some new excitement, but many who went to scoff remained to pray. In our social meetings as students at New College we duly discussed the new phenomenon, and pronounced judgment with the air of infallibility so natural to young men; yet none of us had ever seen or heard him until an occurrence completely turned the tide once for all. A dozen or more of us were attending meetings of our Assembly in London. We had adjourned to the tea-room from the afternoon session, and were thinking of going to our respective quarters, when some one looked in at the door and made the announcement that Charles Spurgeon was to preach that evening in the Standard Theatre—I think it was—in Holborn close by. At once the idea caught on, and with one accord we trooped off and secured good places. I do not know whether Spurgeon would notice the row of eager and critical young faces right opposite to him in the front row of seats, but he had too great a message to be influenced by trifles of this kind. That was a memorable service to all of us. His text was taken from the Book of Job: 'Oh that I knew where I might find him.' At the close of the service we walked quietly out. Not a word was spoken. Each man made for his own lodging-place, to sit and brood over the fact that a prophet had indeed arisen in Israel. That was fifty-eight years ago, but I have never lost the spell that was thrown over me then, or the conviction that Spurgeon's somewhat rigid theological cast of thought was the real thing, the thing that must win and hold the world.

Another of the pulpit worthies of those days was Thomas Guthrie, of Edinburgh. I went one Sunday afternoon to hear him in the well-known church in the High Street. There was a crowd waiting for admission until the regular seat-holders had taken their places. Five minutes before time the doors were thrown open. I was one of the throng that had to seize the opportunity to get a seat if possible, but failing that I was fain to stand in the aisle during the whole service; and services were services in those days. An hour and a half was about a minimum. Five years later I was discussing preachers with a fellow-student, and

I mentioned having heard Guthrie, and the particular text from which he preached: 'Not for thy righteousness nor for the uprightness of thine heart' (Deut. ix. 5). 'Why!' said he, 'I was there, and I heard him take that text.' We set to work, and from our combined recollections we reconstructed the sermon from beginning to end. Men are apt to speak of sermons as commonplace and ineffectual. Instances like these go to show that some preaching is effectual enough to leave life-long impressions.

I have not referred to more public affairs which marked those years. We have them duly dealt with in historical books, but I do not ignore the fact that there were events which stirred the national feeling down to its very depths. There was, of course, the Crimean War, from the chequered light and shade of which there stand out never-to-be-forgotten episodes, such as the charge of the Light Brigade, and the wave of sympathetic feeling which swept over the country when Florence Nightingale headed the movement for a better system of nursing in the military hospitals, indeed in the whole practice of nursing. Then there was the Indian Mutiny, when Great Britain had to learn perforce the lesson which it is to be hoped she will never unlearn as to the more equitable and therefore wiser treatment of subject races. Such events as the massacre at Cawnpore and the relief of Lucknow struck a chord of emotion in all hearts, from the highest to the lowest.

PART II
THE MISSION FIELD, 1858-1880

CHAPTER VI

THE MISSIONARY

As an accredited preacher of the gospel to the heathen, Moffat's ministry only covered a period of twenty-two years (1858-1880); but the true missionary is perhaps born, not made, and it may be said of him in the wider sense of the word that he was at no time anything else. A man of strong religious convictions and deep piety, he had inherited the missionary spirit of his parents, and to preach the gospel, or in other ways to further the kingdom of righteousness, represented the ruling motive of his life.

Other factors combined to fit him for this work among the natives of South Africa. He had spent his boyhood on a mission station, and as a child learned the language of the surrounding people; hence when grown to manhood he brought with him a knowledge and a sympathy that enabled him to form an accurate estimate of native character. Few men, indeed, knew them better, and his patience in dealing with them seemed inexhaustible.

He knew what is so often forgotten or overlooked, that it is impossible to force the pace with primitive minds, and that any growth in moral or intellectual culture must necessarily be slow if it is to be of any real value. He realised, also, that too much cannot be expected of them, and that allowances must be made for the handicaps of their surroundings.

Moreover, he had a consuming passion for the principles of truth and justice. In part, no doubt, this was temperamental, for the blood of the old Covenanters flowed in his veins, and tyranny or illegitimate authority, whether of the body or the soul, roused his righteous indignation. The cry of the downtrodden and the oppressed ever sounded in his ears as a clarion call to battle, and in the inevitable

conflict that occurs when a higher and a lower race come in contact, as in South Africa, he threw the whole weight of his influence against all the prejudices and injustices under which the latter too often suffer.

He had, therefore, qualifications that, taken together, should have gone to the makings of an ideal missionary ; but, while this is so, it must be granted that in some ways he proved an uncomfortable colleague to those who had to labour with him, especially before the enthusiasm and impetuosity of earlier life had been softened by the larger tolerance and charity that come with increasing years.

Where the principles of truth and justice were implicated, the scales of right and wrong were set as to a feather-weight, and for him all lies were black ; of the white or grey variety he knew nothing. Where injustice was concerned, he recognised no extenuating circumstances, and the slightest deviation of the scale assumed the same proportions as when the balance kicks the beam. Consequently, when he came into contact with less idealistic temperaments, friction inevitably resulted. While possessed of a shrewd judgment, and more than the average share of common sense, he frequently suffered the common lot of those who see too far and too well, and he seemed to find it difficult to "suffer fools gladly."

It must be confessed also that, though not easily provoked, when roused his temper would glow with a fierceness that suggested an admixture from some far-off ancestor of a strain of Highland with his Lowland blood. But, curiously enough, personal affronts moved him little and were soon forgotten, but injury to those he loved or to those too weak to defend themselves he seemed almost incapable of forgiving.

Even in later years, when the spirit had been tamed, anyone listening to him as he related some tale of wrong or injustice could mark a glint in his eye that told of hidden fires. It is, therefore, not surprising that his presence proved a disturbing element on those non-moral entities called committees, which, as Spurgeon said, "have no bodies to kick and no souls to save," a state of unsubstantiality that perhaps explains the curious anomaly that men will do collectively what they would be ashamed to do individually.

Though imbued with true apostolic fervour, his views on

methods and organisation often ran counter to those that prevail in missionary circles. The glamour that had gathered round missionary enterprise in the early and middle years of last century appeared to him uncalled for and unhealthy, as tending to appeal to mere emotionalism. He detested everything in the shape of cant and humbug; for this reason he held that the naked truth should be told no matter how unpleasant or depressing, and the brightly pictured, often grossly exaggerated, reports that sometimes appear in missionary books and magazines caused him real distress and shame. A good cause should require no such fictitious aids, and he looked upon this as a mere pandering to sensationalism. He noted that obvious and commonplace spheres for missionary effort are often neglected in favour of wild-cat schemes, and that the measure of support given by devotees is often in inverse proportion to the accessibility or suitability of the field. Consequently he looked with disfavour on many of the means employed for obtaining funds.

“It seems strange,” he wrote in 1878, “from this point of view that the finest missionary field in South Africa, viz. the Diamond Fields, among the natives gathered from every part of Africa south of the Zambezi, has been so little worked. The promoters of missions, especially at home, are too apt to regard a tribe or chief as interesting only in proportion as the region is difficult of access and as the conditions are unpromising under which the missionary must accomplish his task. There is a time for everything.

“There is a time for the Church to make an impetuous advance, to seize upon outlying points and to cherish a spirit of adventurous and generous enthusiasm; but is there not also a time for patient and quiet labours, making use of gained ground and preparing a basis of operations for a future campaign? It is an uphill business, but let people wait to know the results of their pecuniary aid till they get to heaven. Meanwhile let them sow their money while we give our labours mixed with sorrow, and often with disappointment.”

Missions, he held, stand or fall on their merits as the fulfilment of a Divine command; to introduce other considerations by appealing to a lower order of emotions was to demean them, and, in his view, no professing Chris-

tian, if consistent, could be other than a whole-hearted supporter of general measures taken to spread the knowledge of his religion. In this respect he would make no terms with Mammon, as an extract from a letter written in later life (1903) here shows.

It had been suggested that, with a view to raising funds for a special object, appeal might be made to some of the South African magnates, who in one way may be said to have benefited indirectly from missionary work.

Moffat's opinion on the subject was asked for, and he replied as follows :

“ Well, as you ask for my opinion I will give it, though it will not be smooth speaking. . . . I am old-fashioned enough not to believe in unsanctified money. I would not go to a man who is not a decided Christian and ask him for money, for his life is a practical negation of the truth he is asked to help in propagating, and if he gave, it would be for some motive unworthy of the great cause, and his money would do no good. Then I do not believe in missionaries or societies putting themselves under obligation to the rich men in South Africa. The time is coming when there will be a life-and-death struggle on the native question. The capitalists are worse than the Boers, and we who stand by the native will have to fight to the death over the question. What sort of figure is a society likely to make against men who have given it handsome donations? These are my views in short, but they are the views of one who has always stood in a minority, and I have small hope of convincing anyone, but when asked I have to speak.”

Apparently many missionaries, while doing their best to carry out the injunction concerning the harmlessness of the dove, forget the equally important wisdom of the serpent, and Moffat in his matter-of-fact way often brought odium upon himself by advocating the principle that zeal should be tempered with discretion. Examples of his practical views in this respect might be multiplied, but one will suffice. Dealing with the tendency for newcomers to rush into the pulpit before their knowledge of a language qualifies them to do so with advantage to their hearers, he writes :

“ The same rules of common sense which we apply to

other things ought to be applied to preaching the gospel to the heathen. It seems to me the climax of absurdity to attempt to address a long statement of abstruse truth (to them at least it is so) to such benighted beings, when we cannot even tell them how to cook a leg of mutton. I do not wonder at anyone rebelling against conventionalities when they conflict with ordinary gumption."

A man of this kind whose character represented such a blend of idealism and practicality could not fail to be misunderstood even by those with whom he was more or less in sympathy. Throughout his whole missionary career his own reports were often pitched in a minor key, and his outspoken judgments and habit of describing experiences in the sombre hues of plain matter of fact tended possibly to damp the enthusiasm that is sustained only by success. In this way he drew upon himself the suspicion of being only a half-hearted worker; in fact some went so far as to express doubts whether he could be regarded even as a Christian, so liable are words and deeds to misconstruction by those who hear or see them. This being so, they are still more liable to suffer a similar fate when viewed in the perhaps distorting mirror of biography, and it is only in the light of what has been written here that much hereafter recorded can be correctly interpreted.

But while a stern critic of faulty methods, he was a sturdy champion of the general principles of missionary effort, and he denied absolutely the right of any man calling himself a Christian to call them in question, as the following extract shows :

"It would be well for those who take exception to the value of missionary work to remember that the men who carry it on, either in their own person as deputies of the churches, or by raising the necessary funds and organising the societies at home, are acting not for themselves, but under a commission which they cannot disregard, and in obedience to an Authority which they cannot disobey. Those who impugn the value of their work and level at them the shafts of their petty ridicule are not aiming at them, but at One who stands at their head, and has given them this work to do. Granted that missionaries make mistakes, and do not always adopt the best methods, they do their best according to the light that is vouchsafed

to them. The superior persons who profess to know better might as well be so good as to point out, not in destructive criticisms, but in practical suggestion, how the work may be better done than it is now. Such suggestions would always be received with pleasure.

There are men who make no claim to be Christians themselves, and have no practical experience of religion in their own lives. In any such case a person is dealing with a subject beyond the range of his own personal experience, and, moreover, subconsciously perhaps, is animated by a sense of antagonism to a movement which he may feel is a silent reproach to himself."

No man ever had ampler opportunity of judging of the value of missionary effort among the natives of South Africa than Moffat. He had come into contact with and had had personal experience of every level of native culture, from the darkest heathenism to its very opposite, and at the very end of his long life we find him expressing his considered judgment with no uncertain voice in these weighty and well-chosen words :

"The black man in Africa, given a reasonable opportunity, will develop a type of character, fully justifying all that has been done for him by missionary societies. Considering the manner in which he is handicapped by the disadvantages of his life in childhood, and by the social atmosphere in which he has had to grow up, his intelligence will bear a favourable comparison with that of large masses of the poorer classes in more civilised countries. I have had men in my service for years together whose integrity has borne the test of severe trial in a way which would have done honour to the highest type of Christianity among ourselves.

Of course there are exceptions. There are men who may succumb to the power of the drink curse. What wonder, when they have before them such startling examples of the way in which even intelligent and refined men lead the way to this fatal indulgence! It must be borne in mind that one dead weight which our natives in South Africa have to carry is the feeling that they are looked down upon and regarded as inferior animals. 'Treat a man like a dog, and he will behave like one,' is fatally true. The wonder is that, living as the natives do under a daily

pressure of this kind, whenever they come in contact with civilisation, or what we are in the habit of calling civilisation, such hold as Christianity may have had upon them in the formation of character does not break down altogether. The fact that so many have weathered the storm, and have come through the ordeal triumphantly, is a compensation such as none but the faithful missionary can truly appreciate.

The native problem in Africa bids fair one of these days to be a tremendous one. It will make all the difference if by that time the native population has been sufficiently permeated by Christian influence to make that problem more capable of a happy and peaceable solution."

Such, then, actually or potentially was the young man who, in 1858, was preparing to leave England under the ægis of Dr. Livingstone, to assist in starting a mission among the once famous but now vanished tribe of the Makololo on the Zambezi. But, as events were to prove, another destination would claim him. His father, Robert Moffat, having gained the friendship of Mosilikatze, chief of the Matabele, had with some difficulty obtained his consent to the establishment of a mission in Matabeleland, but only on one condition: "Umshete,"¹ for so the old chief called him, must either come himself, or send his son. Robert Moffat, knowing that his son John would shortly be coming out to South Africa, but unaware of the arrangement with Dr. Livingstone, had readily agreed; thus on arriving in Cape Town young Moffat found that his services had already been pledged in advance to the Matabele mission. Much against his own personal inclination he accepted what appeared to be the path of duty, and for himself momentous were the issues that hung upon his decision. Had he accompanied the Makololo party, as originally intended, he and his wife would in all probability have shared the fate of that heroic band, most of whom perished.

¹ Among the Bechwana a man and his wife take the name of their first-born with the prefixes Ra (father) and Ma (mother) respectively. Thus Robert Moffat and his wife became among their own people Ra-Mary and Ma-Mary; but when the former visited Mosilikatze the old chief called him "Umshete," or Moshete, as it is generally pronounced, and throughout the whole interior he became known under that name, the disguised Setebele form of his own.

Instead, the London Missionary Society for five years had the advantage of the services of a zealous but unpaid agent in Matabeleland, one upon whose presence the whole existence of the mission depended. It is not too much to say that during those initial critical years Moffat and his wife were the life and soul of this enterprise, futile though subsequent history proved it to have been.

The interest evoked by some men's experiences may depend almost entirely upon the atmosphere of romance or excitement that forms their setting. Those who look here for wild tales of derring-do and moving incidents by flood and field are doomed to disappointment. For one who spent so much of his time in the wilds, Moffat's life was curiously devoid of what would be called adventures. On more than one occasion, it is true, he had to bear the strain of long periods of suspense and anxiety, but of those hours or moments of crowded life when life and death hang in the balance he had but little experience.

Adventures, it is said, only come to the venturesome, and possibly, not being a seeker in this respect, he failed to find, though this is not to assume that he was a man wanting in courage. On one historic occasion death seemed to stare him in the face, and like a brave man he returned the gaze, outwardly without a quiver. Otherwise there were comparatively few opportunities of judging this side of his character, but this much is certain, that his strong habitual self-command would have been unlikely to betray him into any exhibition of fear, however much he might have felt it.

In one direction his lack of adventures is easily explainable. He was no marksman, and he had none of the so-called sporting instincts, a strange fact when his upbringing in a land teeming with game is remembered. Writing in his old age on this subject, he remarks, "I have never made a hobby of killing things for fun"; and, as a matter of fact, the extermination of the beautiful animals that in his boyhood roamed over the plains of South Africa filled him with sorrowful regrets. Possibly in the early days in Matabeleland he may have done a little shooting "for the pot," but there are few references to it, and certainly during the time of which the writer has cognisance he can safely affirm that his father never killed a single head of game.

Though often in close proximity to lions, he never felt called upon to try conclusions with them, and it is doubtful if he ever set eyes on one except behind the bars of a cage. Apart from the absence of all atavistic propensities to kill for the sake of doing so, he regarded his life as something given to him to spend wisely, not to sacrifice thoughtlessly. To imperil it in the gratification of his own pleasure he would have looked upon as a dereliction of duty, though when the latter called he would accept necessary risks in due proportion to the desired end. His attitude in regard to snakes illustrates this, for he looked upon it as a sacred duty to kill all such dangerous reptiles as came across his path, and the following incident, told in his own words, shows that in doing so he was prepared to take more than the usual risk.

The story is perhaps worth noting for itself, since snakes are reported as a rule not to take the offensive without provocation, but this experience of Moffat's appears to contradict that opinion.

“I had quite a novel experience with a snake the other day. I was driving along with Major Lowe in a buggy when we saw a huge cobra in the grass. It was very excited, and had its hood fully expanded. It rushed out into the road and followed the buggy for two or three yards. It seemed a pity to let the brute go, but there was not a thing available, not even a good big shambok, only a small riding whip; it was a sandy place with not a stone to be seen anywhere. I got down with the whip and went back. I saw him lying flat among the grass with a wicked leer in his eye. When I got within a couple of yards of him he suddenly raised his head and came for me full tear. I jumped back into the road, and he stopped, but was evidently ready for another rush. I felt no confidence in the whip, for he was a monster as thick as my arm and about six feet long (Major Lowe thought eight), so I was reluctantly obliged to leave him; but I felt horribly sorry to do so, and I have not got over it yet. I never gave in to a snake before, but I was practically unarmed.”

Most people who live in snake countries have their share of hair-breadth escapes, all of which have this in common, that the size of the serpent and the attendant circumstances tend to become magnified in direct ratio with the

age of the story. Nevertheless the writer is emboldened to give one other little incident as related to him by his father, the central point of which is a little out of the common run of such stories.

Once while travelling with wife and family they arrived in the early hours of the morning at the day's camping place. According to custom the wagon was drawn off the road before outspanning, and then, as he often did on a fine night, Moffat took his blanket and lay down outside, his head near one of the wheels. On waking at daylight he was surprised to find a puff adder, one of the deadliest of South African snakes, lying within a few inches of his nose. He rose hurriedly, whereupon he discovered a curious state of things : the wheel of the wagon had come to a full stop right on top of the snake, thus pinning it down and putting its hindermost part out of action. The front portion, however, was very much alive, and in its struggles from a fixed base it had swept a semicircular area smooth just outside striking distance of the sleeper, who had passed several hours with certain death beside him ; a vivid illustration of—

“ Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
And the little less, and what worlds away ! ”

CHAPTER VII

JOURNEY FROM ENGLAND TO KURUMAN, 1858-1859

“ AT the close of 1856, David Livingstone arrived on his first visit to the Old Country since he had left it in 1840. He had just accomplished a journey right across the African Continent, having started with his faithful Makololo followers from Shesheke, on the Upper Zambezi, and made his way to Loanda on the west coast, returning thence to Shesheke and so onward to Quillamane on the east coast. During these journeyings over regions but dimly known in Europe, he had been completely lost to public view for years together, and his somewhat dramatic appearance, first on the one side of the continent and then on the other, had roused the most lively curiosity; so that his coming was looked forward to with more than usual public interest. On his way home by the Red Sea he had occasion, owing to some breakdown of the steamer, to change his route; and instead of coming all the way by sea via Gibraltar, and landing at Southampton, he came overland through France and landed at Dover.

Telegraphic communication was not what it is now, and much uncertainty attached to his movements. It fell to my lot to meet him in London. My sister, Mrs. Livingstone, had gone to Southampton to await him there, and he forthwith set off to follow her. Before he started we had a quiet meal together. He had been looking with unaffected dismay at the newspapers as he came along, and had realised that he was for the moment the most notable man in Great Britain. I congratulated him on his fame. ‘No!’ he said, ‘I don’t like this sort of thing at all. If it were not for poor Mary and the children, I would like to take ship at once and go straight back to Africa, and get out of all this hullabaloo.’ Popularity was of no account to him, except so far as he might be able

to utilise it for his one absorbing object in life, to open the Dark Continent to the world, so that a stop might be put to the horrors of the slave traffic, of which he had already at that time seen enough in his first great exploratory journey.

Finding that some of the supporters of the Missionary Society were a little dissatisfied at what seemed to them a disproportion between his geographical and his evangelistic work, he deemed it well to withdraw from the Society's service, and to carry on under other auspices the special duty to which he felt that he had been called. The Government at once undertook to fit out an expedition, of which he was to be the leader, the object of which was to open up the continent to the world and to cut the slave trade at its roots. For this purpose the Zambezi and its tributaries were to be thoroughly explored. How all this was accomplished, though with much suffering and apparent failure in some ways, is a story which has been fully told to the world. I may, however, mention one circumstance of a more personal nature relating to myself. David Livingstone had some regrets in leaving the old Society. I was at that time at the close of my college training and in readiness to start; but there had been much of what seemed to him and to me unnecessary delay. He proposed to me that I should go out independently of the Society,¹ and he engaged to give me for five years the same amount of support as I should have received from the Society itself. The details were left to be determined by the course of events; but it was stipulated in our agreement that I was to go to one of the tribes on the banks of the Zambezi. He felt that by this arrangement he would

¹ The London Missionary Society contributed towards the expenses of John S. Moffat's college course, on the understanding that he should, when qualified, enter its service. As things turned out he did not do so, and as soon as he had saved sufficiently out of his modest salary (£150 per annum) he forwarded a cheque for £50 in part-payment of what he regarded as his debt to the Society. To their credit, the directors refused to accept the proffered sum, and in replying to his covering letter, while thanking him for his honourable scruples, they pointed out that, though not nominally working as one of the Society's agents, he was to all intents and purposes acting as one.

This being so, it is strange, to say the least of it, that the official historian of the Society, far from recognising his work in Matabeleland, contents himself with a passing reference to what he describes as "the anomalous position" occupied by John Moffat during the first five years of the Matabele mission.—AUTHOR.

be leaving a deputy in the strictly missionary ranks. It came to pass in the course of events that I found my place alongside of the Society's men, and in close co-operation with them as the pioneers in Matabeleland, now better known as Rhodesia.

Towards the end of February 1858 Livingstone and his wife set sail for the Zambezi. The week before he left he came to officiate at my wedding at Brighton, in conjunction with the Rev. J. N. Goulty. There was a good deal that was quite unconventional about the service and what followed it. Towards the end of the social gathering which followed Livingstone asked for a Bible, and proposed that we should have family worship. He read the one hundred and sixteenth psalm, and offered a solemn and memorable prayer. That psalm remained our Sunday morning portion in our household worship all through the years until our home was broken up forty-five years later. I then accompanied Livingstone up to the station and saw him off by his train, and that was the last time I ever saw him, though, of course, we kept up our correspondence, and were sometimes not very far apart, as geographical distance counts in Europe. In Central Africa it was a different thing.

I was publicly set apart to the work of the Christian ministry on the 31st of March, in the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel, North Street, Brighton. The Rev. Joseph Sortain delivered the charge. Dr. Richard Alliot, John Clayton and others took part. Five days later my wife and I took our departure from Southampton. At that time the Cape mailboat used to leave on Monday mornings, so it was arranged that we with a large party of friends should spend the Sunday in Southampton. It was our privilege on the Sunday morning, worshipping in the Baptist Chapel, to hear the Rev. Alexander Maclaren, afterwards the celebrated Dr. Maclaren of Manchester, preach the last sermon my wife and I were to listen to in England until our next visit some fourteen years later. The vessel in which we embarked was one of the very earliest of the Union Company's Line, which was then undertaking the mail service to the Cape, after a couple of unsuccessful attempts by other companies. There was only one mail dispatched a month, and the contract time for the passage was forty-two days. Our boat, the *Norman*,

was five hundred tons burden. The Cape mailboats now range up to twelve thousand tons, and the contract time is seventeen days, another instance of the progress made in the half-century. There was not much to be done in the way of carrying cargo. All the stowage room was required for the necessary coal to be consumed on the passage, so that when we arrived in Table Bay our vessel was floating like an empty barrel on the surface of the water; whereas at our start we were so deeply loaded that, when our vessel rolled, the water would wash across at the midships, where the main deck was lowest.

We had an exceedingly rough beginning to our voyage, so much so that on the first night at sea the whole of our livestock on deck, consisting of poultry intended for the table, was swept overboard. A few sheep which happened to be in a more sheltered corner were left to us, and served to eke out our supplies. There was no 'cold storage' in those days, and it was an unceasing source of wonder to us how we were all fed, and that very well too. Fortunately there were only about sixteen passengers in the saloon. With the exception of the one usual grumbler, we were all happy and contented. My wife was a poor sailor, and it was a long time before she could take a proper meal, but she bore up with the patient heroism which carried her successfully through many subsequent hardships and difficulties. We had no ship's doctor, but we had a valuable helper in my youngest sister, Jane, who was with us. There was an army surgeon on board, a Dr. Scott, who was going to join his regiment at the Cape. We never could forget his kindness. There were only nine berths available for the more favoured passengers in a sort of deckhouse. The other seven passengers had to make the best of berths down below, where there must often have been suggestions of the Black Hole of Calcutta. There was a French Chevalier on board, with his wife and daughter. The ladies knew no language but their own, and it was quite a boon to them that my wife could speak a little French. These people were bound to St. Helena, and as we did not call there, they had not only the tedious voyage to the Cape, but a return voyage to their destination, when some opportunity might offer. I believe the Chevalier with his one attendant orderly was to mount guard at what had been the tomb of Napoleon Bonaparte

at Longwood. When we had accomplished about two-thirds of our voyage our engines broke down, and for eight days we were under sail, whilst our plucky and indomitable engineer, a Scotsman, by the way, wrestled with his difficulties, and managed to make the necessary repairs. In spite of this drawback we managed to scrape in just to contract time.

It was a pleasant surprise to find my parents in Cape Town. They had come down to meet Livingstone and his wife, who had preceded us. Livingstone had gone on his way to the Zambezi, but Mrs. L. had stayed at the Cape, the state of her health making it undesirable for her to make one of a purely exploring party on the Zambezi, and it had been arranged that she should accompany her parents to Kuruman.¹ We landed in Cape Town on

¹ On arrival at Cape Town, Moffat received the following letter from Dr. Livingstone, which is perhaps worth reproducing here. It illustrates the consuming scientific curiosity which was so characteristic of that remarkable man, who apparently hoped, if possible, to stir up a similar spirit in the mind of his young brother-in-law. Moffat, however, had little trace of it. Though interested in scientific research and discovery in a detached way, he was not one of those who are prompted by an overmastering impulse to probe and to pry into the why and the wherefore of that which lies behind phenomena.

The "Boguera" to which Dr. Livingstone refers is the rite of circumcision and initiation which boys have to undergo amongst the Bechwana, analogous to the "Boyalé," for which see p. 210, chapter xix, part iii.

" ' PEARL ' STEAMER,
April 16, 1858.

" MY DEAR BROTHER,

We have been compelled to alter our plans since leaving England, and Mary must remain at the Cape or go up to Kuruman until after her confinement. I therefore must trouble you to perform a brother's part to her and me by assisting in her journey to Kuruman. I thought that I had done with wagons entirely, and feel very loathe to invest again in these lumbering vehicles, as I still have one at Linyanti which has been but little used.

If you can by hiring get her comfortably up it will be better than buying, but if not then a wagon must be bought, only due regard to economy being maintained. I suppose that £170 may take her up. If I attended to the matter myself it would detain the expedition too long, and probably lead to a disastrous termination of the whole affair. It is this consideration alone that induces me to presume so far on your kindness. I shall make arrangements at the Cape for Mary to draw the money she will need for the journey. Both she and you must do the best you can among people who will cheat you if they can.

We spent a week at Sierra Leone, and expect to be at the Cape in twenty or twenty-one days from there. That with fifteen from Liverpool is not a bad passage. As you wend your way to the North you may feel inclined to investigate any point that comes before you.

What think you of ascertaining the size of the Cape elephant? Lichen-

the 18th of May, and it was three months before we could make a start on our northward journey. To those accustomed to the present order of things, it may seem unaccountable what we could have been doing all that time. It would be difficult to describe the multifarious preparations which had to be made for a journey such as that which lay before us, and not only for the journey, but for the possible long period of isolation which would follow. Our destination was fifteen hundred miles to the north-east of Cape Town, and in a country four or five hundred miles from our nearest civilised neighbours. The only way of travelling was with the ox-wagon, and a hundred miles a week would be regarded as a fair rate of progress. Provision had to be made for every conceivable want incidental to a civilised existence for two or three years to come. Suitable wagons had to be found, with teams of from twelve to fourteen oxen. In all these matters it was a great help to have the benefit of my father's experience and, I may say also, of his wonderful energy.

The long delays were at last overcome, and on the 20th of August, 1858, my wife and I made our start from Cape Town. Our objective was the headquarters of the Chief Mosilikatse, about fifteen hundred miles away to the north-east, but we did not reach our destination until the 28th October of the following year; and then we had to wait

stein heard that some were 18 feet high? See if you meet a man who measured them. Are ostriches monogamists or polygamists? You will see them; try and count their paces with your watch when at full speed. Ascertain the length of his stride. Any information as to the cause of the migrations of springboks, wildebeestes—the times—numbers?

Try and discover the root and plant by which the Hottentots make their mead to ferment. Is there anything really irreligious in the Boguera, or is it anything more than a political rite? Is there anything besides wool-growing that would be a profitable investment for the Bechwanas that would turn their lands to the best account and establish them in them.

Take notes as to the diseases known in the country, and observe the absence of pulmonary complaints (except pneumonia), so as to be able to recommend the climate to the consumptive. Something must be done to prevent the country being overrun by Boers. Some of these points may serve to wile away a leisure moment, and as I was benefited by Sir John Herschel's turning my attention to certain subjects, you may be none the worse for these hints.

kindest regards to Emily. May every blessing attend you,
I am, etc.,

DAVID LIVINGSTONE.

Now, as we have talked matters over before, I have nothing to add. Do whatever you think will be best for the cause of Christ."

two months before we found ourselves at the place where we were to settle down to the work we had come to do. The modern traveller, who now takes his seat in the train on Tuesday morning in Cape Town, and on the following Thursday evening, with next to no exertion on his part, finds himself gliding into the station at Bulawayo, may almost gasp with wonder as to what we could have been doing all that time. It was not simply a question of a long distance to travel, but for a considerable part of that distance there was not even the semblance of a wagon road; and there were hindrances arising out of the political condition of some of the regions through which we had to pass.

The relation of our first day's experience will afford a specimen of the value of what is becoming in these days a lost art, the exercise of patience. It had been arranged that we with my parents and sisters were to make up one party. The other four missionaries, who had arrived later from England, had not yet completed their preparations, and were to follow in due course. There were practical difficulties about even our smaller party all starting together out of the middle of Cape Town with a train of four wagons, so it was arranged that my wife and I were to go out to a farm about fifteen miles away, where we could conveniently await the others. The farm was the residence of Mr. Parker, to whose kind suggestion we owed the idea, which did away with many difficulties. Accordingly our wagon was drawn up in front of the house in Loop Street where we were staying, and all our stores and other necessaries arranged in their places. The wagon itself was fairly comfortable; which it needed to be, seeing that it was to be our house on wheels for many months to come. The oxen, a team of twelve, were brought, and we at last drove out of the town, accompanied for the first mile by a few faithful friends. Such a spectacle to-day in Cape Town would draw a large crowd, but then it had not become sufficiently unusual or interesting.

We began to realise that we were fairly away when we were clear of the houses, and saw lying before us the long straight causeway, built of ordinary red road metal, across what were then known as the Cape Flats. These were a waste of white sea sand, here and there thinly dotted with low and scanty scrub; but not sufficiently so to prevent

the sand from drifting under the prevalent south-east winds. For the first twelve miles we had the macadamised road, and then we had to turn off and to make our way to the farm which was to be the rendezvous of the party. We had not started as early in the morning as might have been desirable, and we had some detention in the middle of the day owing to our wagon gear not having got into good running order yet; darkness was coming on, there had been heavy rains, and there was more than one slough of despond in the bypath we had to travel. Our wagon driver proved to be less competent than we had hoped, and just as we were beginning to see a little way off the welcome light in the window of the farmhouse to which we were bound, we landed unawares in a hopeless morass. Our good host and his family were quickly on the spot, and took us to the kindly shelter of their home. It was decided that nothing could be done that night in the darkness, so the oxen were outspanned and the wagon left to itself, while the driver and his mate made their bivouac in the bushes close by. So much for our first day's journey.

My wife, whose chief experience in land travelling had been in the train between London and Brighton, gave a deep sigh that night and said, thinking of the fourteen hundred miles still ahead of us, 'When shall we ever get there at this rate?' Neither she nor I knew of the hindrances of other kinds which we had to encounter, and how the next twelve months were to be spent; and it was just as well that we had quite enough to occupy our thoughts day by day, without having to look forward too much.

In the course of a few days the rest of our party came up, and we made our start all together, a cavalcade of four wagons. There was also a small drove of a dozen donkeys, which last gave us abundant occasion for the exercise of patience. They had been provided by the Government with an idea which ultimately proved quite visionary, of running a post from our northernmost station, not yet in being, in order to form a connecting link by a land route with the Livingstone expedition on the Zambezi. It would have been ungracious on our part to have refused to take charge of these animals, as we were the only people who would be going in that direction for a long time to come. The idea was that, as there was a belt of country

infested by tse-tse fly all along the south bank of the Zambezi, donkeys, which are immune from the sting of the fly,¹ would be useful for the purpose of carrying the mails. These particular donkeys which were given into our charge were a miscellaneous collection from various sources, and had not learned to keep together, and my space would fail me to tell how much of our time was lost in dealing with their vagaries. They had an inveterate habit of wandering off in twos and threes, on no principles intelligible to human beings. The coloured men in our employ, whom we had engaged in Cape Town, had not the faculty of the native Bantu for following the 'spoor' of animals. I have had Bechwanas in my service whose keenness of observation no creature, however wily, could evade. It might be a few hours, or it might be a couple of days, but once put one of these men on the track of the truant, and it was only a question of a few hours longer.

Another hindrance at the outset was the rain. It was not till the 1st of September, eleven days after my first start from Cape Town, that our wagons wound their way up through Bain's Pass, and we took our last look at Table Mountain, then still only forty miles away. Bain's Pass has been left out in later years. The railroad to the Interior now takes a longer and easier route; but there is still a good road over the Pass, which by the way is a fine example of skilful engineering, and the tourist who wants scenery cannot do better than to try that route. We had one hindrance after another—drenching rains, swollen rivers, and in one instance a bridge swept away. At last we had done with the mountain roads and rivers and entered the Karroo, of which travellers now get only a fleeting glimpse, as they skim over it in the train for just a few hours. The Karroo is not exactly a desert, for there are widely scattered farm homesteads. These have generally small fields and orchards attached, but the region is unsuited for agriculture on any considerable scale, and there is not much to be said for it even for pastoral purposes. There is no grass, the herbage is a sort of low scrub on which stock may live and even fatten, if they are accustomed to it.

We had now an open and comparatively level country to

¹ This belief has proved erroneous. Donkeys are as susceptible as most other domestic animals.—AUTHOR.

traverse, and we had passed out of the district in which the winter rains were prevalent ; but we were confronted with a new difficulty. The oxen which we had bought at the Cape, never very good to begin with, and unaccustomed to the peculiar pasture, began to fail ; and it was with the utmost difficulty that we reached Beaufort West, about three hundred and forty miles from Cape Town, on the 7th of October. Out of the forty-six oxen with which our party had originally started, only twenty-three were left, and we were almost at a stand. In the case of my parents and Mrs. Livingstone, the difficulty was overcome by the kindness of the Devenish family, who provided them with fresh teams to carry them forward at least another two hundred miles. We remained with the tired remnant, to take a lengthened rest in Beaufort West. The time there was not altogether lost. We were hospitably entertained by Mr. and Mrs. James Cowan, both of whom have long passed away. We were in an atmosphere of good will. The Rev. Colin Fraser, the minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, helped us in many ways. There were a good many English and Scotch people who were glad to secure, if only for a time, the services of someone who could minister to them in their own language, there being at that time no provision for them in this way. Our oxen were in time thoroughly recruited, and we had no further trouble on that score.

On the 2nd of March we reached what was then the little frontier village of Hopetown, on the south bank of the Orange River, which was then the boundary of the Cape Colony. Our wagon driver, who was one of the men who had formed our party from Cape Town, was a Malay ; and the country now before us was a strange land to him and full of bogies. We could not induce him to entertain the idea of going any farther. To add to his fears, he had been hearing some talk along the road of rumours which were abroad that the Transvaal Boers were entertaining hostile intentions towards the new missionary departure into the further interior, about which there will be more to be said further on. He was a good servant, and we were sorry to part with him. He was a Mohamedan by religion, of which we had at least one instance which exemplified his sincerity. We had found it a little difficult along the road to provide for our commissariat in the item of fresh

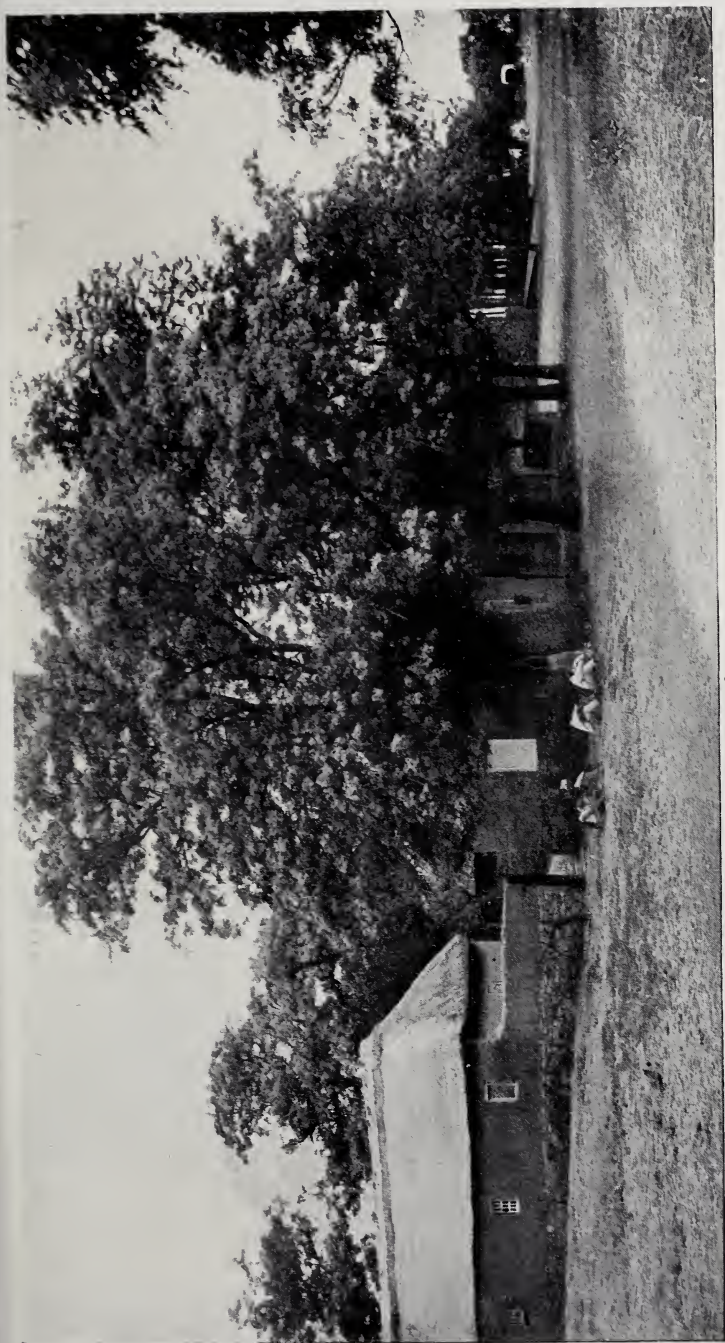
meat. According to the requirements of his religion, the flesh of any animal that was not slaughtered according to some prescribed rite was to him taboo. We could only buy meat from the farmers on our way already slaughtered. We were too small a party to kill a sheep on our own account, as with the hot weather so much of the meat would have been merely wasted. Our driver was faithful to his scruples, so for days he had to content himself with rice and butter and such bread as we could obtain, and I could see that he was suffering real privation, though he never complained.

It was a great pleasure and a valuable help to meet my brother Robert at Hopetown. He had come from Kuruman, where he was carrying on business with the natives. He had plenty of wagons and men, and many of our difficulties were at an end. Before us lay the Orange River, and it was in flood. The only way to cross was to unload our wagon, take it to pieces, and ferry it and its contents over in a curious flat-bottomed barge, propelled with a pair of oars. It took the whole day to accomplish this. We had an interlude which might have taken a serious turn, but about which there was a spice of humour. The boat we used belonged to one of the trading firms in Hopetown. There was another trader some distance away on the north side of the river, and therefore out of British jurisdiction. He also had a boat, and he had prevailed upon the local chief to try and set up a monopoly, by hindering the Hopetown boat from plying. Accordingly, when we sent over our first boatload, a party of his men, who had been waiting, swooped down upon our boat just as it had been unloaded, and refused to let it return. The men in charge of the boat, who belonged to the same tribe as the captors, collapsed, and the whole party adjourned to the top of the bank and sat down.

Unfortunately for them, they had reckoned without their host. My Malay driver had gone over, too, and was sitting alone by the waterside wondering what sort of a country he had got into. The men on the top of the bank were so situated that they could not see what went on below. The river was broad, but not too broad for our voices to carry across. The Griquas could only understand Dutch. I called to my man in English: 'You are a Cape man; you can row, bring the boat across.' No

sooner said than done. In a brace of shakes he had unhooked the chain, grasped the two oars, and was rowing across as only a practised fisherman could. He had got wellnigh half across before the enemy espied him, and with an unearthly yell rushed down to where their own boat was lying, but too late! They followed in force, and for a quarter of an hour there was a war of words. However, my brother, who knew all about them and their ways, and could talk their patois as well as they could themselves, succeeded in making them draw in their horns, pointing out to them that they were clearly in the wrong, and must behave themselves, which they did, giving us no further trouble.

In due time we got away, and with willing and efficient wagon hands soon covered the distance of one hundred and seventy miles which lay between us and Kuruman. We had another river to cross, the Vaal, but there was a village of Bechwanas, who were only too glad to welcome us and to render us all the help we needed. Here also there was a boat, and the same tedious process had to be gone through, but we were among our own people, and we had plenty of hearty goodwill on their part to expedite matters. We spent a Sunday amongst them, and I had the first opportunity of giving my message among them, but not in their own language. It had been the language of my boyhood, but for ten years I had never occasion to use it, and I was somewhat rusty, and I had to resort to the help of an interpreter; but the experience was a happy and encouraging one. We drove into Kuruman on the 18th of February, more than eleven years since I had last seen it."



ROBERT MOFFAT'S HOUSE AT KURUMAN IN WHICH J. S. MOFFAT WAS BORN.
The church is visible beyond.



CHAPTER VIII

JOURNEY FROM ENGLAND TO KURUMAN (*continued*)

THE travelling bullock-wagon of those days is now a thing almost of the past. Like the stage coach in England, it has given way before the railway and other modern methods of travel. In outlying parts it may still hold its own, but so far as the Colony is concerned it is even more unfamiliar than a hansom cab in the streets of London.

Few of the younger generation in South Africa have had personal experience of travel by wagon; in fact there are not many who have seen such a vehicle fitted up in the old style.

To English minds, no doubt, the word may suggest travelling caravans and pleasant summer days of picnicking. But no two things could be more unlike. Apart from all else, in the mere matter of accommodation for his own person the caravanner has all the advantage. It is true, when empty, the ox-wagon provides a larger area of cubic capacity than the ordinary house on wheels, which is a familiar sight in England; but when all the impediments for a long journey have been lodged in the former, there remains, at the best, but little room for the owner, who has to be content to crawl about as well as he can on the top of his possessions.

In the matter of commissariat things in those days were primitive. Tinned and preserved foods, by means of which a Christmas dinner prepared in England may nowadays be eaten in the middle of Africa, were not then so easily procurable. Some simple groceries, a supply of meal, rice, and perhaps some dried fruit, would constitute the whole outfit. It was a life in which time ceased almost to have any meaning, and the delays and vicissitudes of ox-wagon travelling were proverbial. The slow pace

and general uncertainty of what was the only means of travel have left an impress on South African character which can be traced even to this day.

It bred a certain pessimistic indifference to time and fate, with the result that the benefits of punctuality and celerity ceased to be appreciated. Moreover, life resolved itself into a series of makeshifts, and it is noteworthy that even to this day your true South African rarely mends a broken thing at once. Instead he patches it up temporarily once or twice, until it dawns upon him that it would be as well to have it done properly, by which time it is often too late. It fell to the lot of the writer in recent years to journey for four months in an ox wagon across the Kaligari Desert. He can vouch for the fact that for a single person it can be comfortable enough, but what it must have been, from an adult point of view, to live in such conditions with a wife, not to speak of children, he can only picture with feelings of horror mingled with reverent admiration!

In her letters and journal Emily Moffat gives a good description of her wagon home on her first introduction to it in Cape Town—the “Pavilion,” as she named it, a term that would suggest itself not inaptly to a Brighton girl—and some further particulars of the journey between Cape Town and Kuruman :

“Our wagon is drawn by twelve oxen. We have a driver named ‘Adam,’ and the leader Emanuel, the first and second Adam! I have named this gipsy home of ours the ‘Pavilion.’

In the front of it, forming the driver’s seat, is what we call the ‘fore chest,’ containing our daily supplies of tea, coffee, rice, etc. These are kept in small canisters or strong bags. A similar chest right at the back is called the ‘after chest,’ from which we fill up our fore chest weekly. Immediately behind the former are my two black boxes, which just fit in, and contain the clothing for the journey. This brings us to the ‘kartel,’ a kind of stretcher slung across the wagon—underneath this are all our boxes of stores, and on top of it our mattress. The forward part of this forms our seat, and a movable back is put up in the daytime, and a little table made to turn up and down on the right-hand side, so, as we sit, my black boxes are our footstool (when sitting on the mattress the travellers’ heads

would only be a few inches from the roof, or tent, as it was called). Behind the 'kartel' are various stores and things for the men. Hanging round inside the tent are six carriage bags made of sail-cloth—very useful and handy."

Characteristic of the uncertainty of ox-wagon travelling was the long-looked-for start from Cape Town, of which she writes :

CAPE TOWN,
Thursday Afternoon, August 29, 1858.

"Oh! oh! a climax. Before breakfast this morning! We were hard at it stowing things into the wagon—such a process. By twelve o'clock we were fairly in readiness. Several friends had come to see us off. Well, our men were to meet the oxen at the toll-gate a mile out of Cape Town with the yokes, and bring them in. We waited: one o'clock no oxen; two o'clock no oxen; so John starts off for the toll-gate; finds our men still waiting, but no oxen, so he returned with the tale of woe. Meanwhile a man from the farm where the oxen had been kept came to us, asking very coolly whether one span or two were wanted. Mr. Moffat (senior) wrote yesterday ordering his son's oxen, but the idea of waiting until two hours after the time appointed before sending to inquire! However, Mr. Moffat has gone off on horseback, and we are awaiting his return to learn whether we are likely to see our oxen this evening."

It would appear that the missing animals did not turn up after all until the following day, when the start was made as described by Moffat.

A full week elapsed before the united party were able to leave the rendezvous. After three days' travel, during which inevitable weak points or deficiencies in outfit were discovered and as far as possible adjusted, Wellington, then only a small village, was reached, and the following account of the journey over the mountains is given in Emily Moffat's journal:

"Wednesday is fine, but a sombre, grey day. The ascent at first is very gradual and the road good—oh, how can I give you an idea of this scene? High and rocky

mountains on our right above us, and on our left the ever-deepening valley, and beyond that other ranges of heights. The road is one perpetual zigzag, grand chasms constantly opening out with long grasses and arums.

After about twelve miles we reach the saddle of the Pass (Bain's), and here we are introduced to fresh mountains rising in grandeur, and we are fairly between immense heights. We are soon descending, and on our right, hundreds of feet below, a mountain stream is rushing down. It is really an awfully grand sight, and amidst all the greatness are the smaller objects of interest, hidden nooks of flowers and ferns. I think I shall never lose the influence of the day's scenes, surrounded as we have been by heights varying in shape and appearance, some bare and rocky, others green and radiant. I longed to linger and pitch our tent for a week, to shut out the world and to be shut out from it.

After three hours' descent, we emerge on to a large plain with a river running through it with hills all round. Here is our resting place.

We are not camped long before our 'attendant' rain visits us, and all night the wind howls and the water falls, threatening to damage our little ark. It nobly braves the test and is thoroughly proof against both enemies. The sole harm is some sleepless hours.

Thursday.—Still a lowering sky. Sad tales reach us of filling rivers and broken bridges. Night sets in with increasing rain—patter, patter, on the canvas of the wagon, keeps us in perpetual remembrance of the dreariness outside. We say with our hearts 'a brighter day tomorrow dawn upon us all,' but no brighter morrow comes, for this is Friday evening, and patter, patter, is still the tune. It is wonderful to me that the men can heat us any water, but they do so, and we relished to-day, in the cold and wet, some of the beef-tea from home. What a finale—beef-tea! After telling of the sublime, to come down to that. Monday we are able to start. The waters have abated and we cross the river safely; we journey on slowly till we come to the broken bridge. Here we have a small scene. Mrs. Livingstone's wagon, and then ours, come to a dead standstill in the middle of the stream. With considerable effort two spans of oxen move them and we get across to our camping place.

We have now another mountain pass before us (Mitchell's); the scenery gets grander and grander. 'Tis walking on enchanted ground, with dizzy brow and tottering feet. We three juveniles (!) are pedestrians. The pathway is narrow here, and we see a large drove of oxen appearing and into the nearest wagon we rush; it is that of the parentals. Mrs. Moffat and Mrs. Livingstone are in it. We stop for the creatures to pass, but our loose cattle, which are driven in front, get mixed up with the set coming down. Such a hubbub! there is no getting them separated, and they get all huddled together and entangled among the yokes of our wagon oxen. These get pushed aside, and our wagon comes to the edge of the precipice two or three hundred feet deep. It was truly frightful. I fully made up my mind to a wholesale deposit of Moffats into the river below. One poor ox of Mr. Moffat's got so worried that he fell over some twenty feet, then regained his footing, walked to the bottom, swam across the river and went on his way. Whither we have yet to learn. One thing is certain: if ever I live to return to England you will surely see me a strong-minded woman. Still, I would not have missed this afternoon's scene. The Pass is even finer than the former. A small uninteresting hamlet called Ceres was our next stopping-place, and after leaving it our progress was much hindered by the state of our poor dear oxen. The roads are bad, and the crossing of these streams exhaust their energy. Every day almost we lose one or more. Mrs. Livingstone's especially are failing grievously. It is deplorably slow work, and such long pauses! We do literally *creep*. If Africa is destined to be Christianised and civilised at bullock-wagon pace, the end of the world cannot be so near as some believe.

We expect soon to reach what is called Karoo Poort, and then will come the long Karoo, which will occupy more than a week to pass."

As related by Moffat, Beaufort West was at length reached, and during the enforced stay their first child was born. Though at that time only a tiny country "dorp," or village, the place must have appeared as a haven of refuge to the young wife and expectant mother, and she received much appreciated help in her hour of need. But it was her

first introduction to back country colonial life as it then existed, and the social atmosphere, with its free and easy manners and customs, seems to have surprised the young Englishwoman, brought up as she had been in the secluded surroundings of an English home.

“Life here,” she writes, “is sadly different from English society. I have been shocked at things which are tolerated in really decent and respectable circles. In the interior I expected to find a low standard of right and wrong. If all colonists resemble these specimens, I am sure there is much effort on their behalf. I imagine I should prefer to live in a heathen land than among heartless professors. As for the Dutch, they never read a book, and it is difficult to get on with people who are mournfully ignorant and prejudiced, but who are perfectly satisfied with their condition and think everyone who differs from them, even in trifles, is very inferior. My pride has been nettled more than once, and I cannot help feeling gratefully superior.”

Between Beaufort West and the next little village of Victoria fresh trouble fell upon the inexperienced parents. The nursing mother developed an abscess, a painful enough thing in the most favourable circumstances with medical aid at hand, but in a jolting wagon, and with only homely remedies to fall back upon, it must have been a trying experience, though she writes bravely about it:

“Alas! my trouble which had been going on so well threatens sadly and becomes increasingly painful. *Poor John*, he has to be maid of all work; I with my poor arm am almost useless and have to be a passive onlooker (the hardest thing to me). When we outspan John has always to be making baby’s food, and poultices for me; then making the bed, for, oh! *I could not*. Many a laugh we have had at our difficulties. One cannot imagine such scenes beforehand, and it is well we cannot, for they are a strange contrast to the comforts and luxuries of our English life. Don’t think I am grumbling. I am only thankful that, after all, we get on as well as if we were enjoying those loved home ‘blessings.’”

As matters did not improve, a halt for two weeks was

made at Victoria, where with rest and the kind attention of friends the trouble passed away; but shortly after resuming their journey the child developed a rash, which, from the marks left by it, the elders at Kuruman judged to have been a mild attack of smallpox, which was prevalent at the time.

When they reached Kuruman he had perfectly recovered and seemed none the worse, but a few weeks later an epidemic of something like influenza swept through the station, and among the victims was the four-months-old baby, who had travelled thus far only to be laid in the little burial-ground where rests the dust of other now forgotten pioneers.

The bereaved parents, though thankful that this tragedy had occurred while they were among friends, who could help and cheer them, would fain have pushed on in order to find distraction in changing scenes, but the hostile attitude of the Boers still further delayed them, concerning which Moffat gives the following particulars:

“Eleven years had made a good deal of difference in the Kuruman station and in the district generally. The external aspect of things showed more than ever a striking contrast between the place itself and the surrounding country. This could hardly be called a desert, though it consisted mainly of dry, sandy plains, with scattered grey bush and long coarse grass. Owing to the lack of surface water, there seemed no possibility of improvement. The missionary station was a true oasis in the midst of this wilderness, with its everflowing and abundant stream, the water of which was now turned to full account, not only by the missionaries, but by the people who had gathered round them, and had adopted the art of irrigation of which they had the object lesson in the mission gardens. In this direction the improvement was obvious enough. The long lines of willow and seringa trees were in their full glory; the marshy valley had been well drained and had become a fruitful field.”

So far as the direct work of the mission was concerned, the same thing might be said. There were full congregations, flourishing day schools, and a predominantly religious influence pervading the whole community; but for all that there was a change. The impact of the approaching

civilised races was beginning to make itself felt, and with it the inevitable disillusion of the native mind. In the earlier days, which have already been referred to, the few Europeans who visited the country were, for the most part, even if not actually professed Christians, men of respectable character. They showed at least some deference to the feelings of the missionaries in their behaviour among the natives. But now a different class of men had begun to come into the country, and the natural comment of the natives was: 'These people come from the same country as our teachers, and yet they do not seem to believe the things that the missionaries tell us.' It was just the old story which we have in the Parable of the Tares. It was no wonder that, with the inborn tendency to evil, some of the young people were apt to be led away by the reckless immorality they saw in men of a race they had been accustomed to regard as superior to their own. Then there was another disquieting influence at work. There was a slow but steady tide of aggression from the eastward. The Emigrant Boers, who had left the Cape Colony in the thirties, had by this time established themselves in the more favoured regions which now form those parts of the South African Union known as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. They had looked upon these regions as theirs to take, and had taken them accordingly. The native tribes had been easily disposed of. It had not been possible for them, with their puny assegais and their want of organisation, to make a stand against these civilised intruders, well armed and mounted. We must not blame these emigrants too harshly. We, with our superior knowledge and pretensions, cannot say much, in view of the manner in which we have dealt with some of the uncivilised races with which we have come in contact in South Africa itself, not to mention other countries.

All the same, the people in Bechwanaland began to be greatly disquieted by what they saw going on farther eastward.

On my father's return from Cape Town about the end of the year 1858, he received a letter of which the following is a copy :

'REV. MR. MOFFAT,

Sir, We have ascertained, through private com-

munication, that you are again making preparation for another journey to Mosilikatse, with other missionaries. Sir, if it be so, we would warn you to procure an order from His Honour the President, Mr. W. Pretorius; otherwise we shall not allow you to pass. We have the honour to be your friends

(Signed) J. L. PRETORIUS, *Commandant.*

J. W. VILJOEN, *Field Cornet.*

D. L. BOTHA, *Prov. Field Cornet.'*

As the route to Mosilikatse lay far to the west of any of the Boer settlements, it would have been a false step to have recognised Boer jurisdiction in that direction over independent native tribes. With the Kalahari Desert on the west and the Transvaal on the east, the only open route that remained for the missionaries, and, indeed, for British subjects generally, to the regions beyond was through the line of tribes who still preserved their independence along the margin of the desert. My father could not give his assent to a demand which would have permanently closed the Northern Interior. It was only five years before this that these same men who signed the letter above had made a raid into the region in question and had broken up three of our stations and had deported the missionaries, Roger Edwards and Walter Inglis, under a sentence of banishment, under pain of death if they should venture to return. They had also attacked the tribe with whom David Livingstone had been working; he, fortunately for himself, being absent at the time on a journey to the Cape, or he might have been even more severely dealt with, he being regarded as the arch offender. As it was, his house and belongings, such as they were, were looted.

All these events made it extremely unlikely that we or our work would meet with much consideration, and moreover there were the far-reaching consequences of allowing the door to the north to be finally closed. My father thought that the best thing to be done would be to forward on the letter to the Governor at the Cape, and leave him to decide on the best course to pursue. The Governor, Sir George Grey, took prompt action. He wrote a letter and caused it to be forwarded by a special dispatch rider from Hopetown to the Transvaal, to be delivered to the

President himself. It was not certain where he might be found, but the messenger was to go to Potchefstrom, then regarded in some sort as the capital. The affairs of the South African Republic were then in a very rudimentary condition; there were no regular posts to be depended upon, and it was sometimes doubtful how far the authority of the so-called President extended. Sir George Grey's letter was a good blend of courtesy and firmness.

(Copy)

‘GOVERNMENT HOUSE, CAPE TOWN,
January 27, 1859.

TO THE HONOURABLE PRESIDENT PRETORIUS,

Your Honour is aware that several British subjects have during many years settled themselves at Kuruman, where there is now an extensive and prosperous missionary station, for the establishment and support of which several of Her Majesty's subjects have contributed large sums of money, and in the welfare of which they are deeply interested. Reports have now reached me that some persons residing in the Transvaal territory have determined to destroy the missionary stations, and to injure the missionaries residing at Kuruman.

I cannot believe that such is the case, but I take the liberty to recommend the persons and properties of Her Majesty's subjects there to your protection; and should you not have sufficient power to protect them, I beg you will apprise me of the fact, in order to enable me without delay to take such steps as it will then be my duty to take.

I have, etc.,
(Signed) GEORGE GREY.’

When the messenger reached Potchefstrom, some time in March, he found that the President was absent, and he had to wait for his return, as his whereabouts was unknown and it would have been little use to go in search of him. This gives some idea of the very rudimentary organisation of the comparatively new community calling itself the South African Republic. The end of it was that the Governor's dispatch rider had to possess his soul in patience

for nearly two months before he could return as the bearer of the following missive :

(Copy)

'To His Excellency Sir George Grey, etc. etc.

GOVERNMENT OFFICE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC, POTCHEFSTROM,
May 6, 1859.

HONOURABLE SIR !

The Executive Council of the South African Republic have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Excellency's letter, dated January 27, 1859, and regret that the absence of the President has so long delayed a reply to it.

The existence of the missionary station at Kuruman is known to us, as also the support given to it by many of Her Britannic Majesty's subjects.

As regards the reports which have reached Your Excellency, that the burghers of this Republic intend to destroy the missionary station, the Executive Council of the South African Republic are totally unaware of such a plan, and will cause any inhabitants of this Republic who may be bent on such intentions to be prosecuted according to law.

The real cause of these reports will not be unknown to Your Excellency. The South African Republic have more than a year ago waged war with the chiefs Mahura and Gasibona, and after the death of the latter, a treaty of peace was concluded. Mahura did not fulfil the conditions of this treaty, and the Government of the South African Republic are convinced by several proofs that the missionaries at Kuruman have influenced Mahura, and advised him to violate the treaty which he had previously agreed to. In connection with this circumstance, the Executive Council must communicate that reports have reached them that, in the latter end of the month of August 1858, the missionary R. Moffat, in company with several others, had left Cape Town with three wagons, one of which was laden with ammunition, that this powder wagon was first conveyed by bullocks and afterwards by mules, via Hopetown, to Kuruman; for the purpose of sooner reaching Mahura, who, according to reports, had found himself in a dangerous position.

The Government of the South African Republic consider

it a pleasing task, always and everywhere, to protect the persons and properties of Her Britannic Majesty's subjects; but the Executive Council cannot allow the enemies of the South African Republic to be instigated against us to violate concluded treaties, and they consider that they only follow a recognised principle when they rank them as enemies who provide the avowed enemies of our State with ammunition.

Finally, the Executive Council of the South African Republic cannot refrain from recommending the missionary station at Kuruman to the care of Your Excellency: because they are really deserving of the large sums of money contributed by Her Britannic Majesty's subjects, and which are appropriated according to the object of the donors; and the Executive Council solemnly assure Your Excellency that the missionary station at Kuruman will be warmly supported and protected, in the same manner as all other missionaries in the State, when we have the conviction that the seeds of discord are not sown there, nor the heathens are instigated to wage war with Christians, but that the true gospel of Christ is propagated.

(Signed) W. J. PRETORIUS.
— SCHUBARD.'

This letter can be left to speak for itself. The charge against the missionaries of not only counselling the natives to resist the encroachments of the Emigrant Boers, but of supplying them with arms and ammunition, has never had the semblance of a foundation in fact, but has always been a favourite one. As a matter of fact, the natives in those days were practically so poorly provided with warlike munitions of this kind that they could offer no effectual resistance to the invaders, who took possession of that vast region now known as the Orange Free State and the Transvaal with scarcely any fighting at all, such as could merit the name of war. Of course the missionaries could not be expected to speak approvingly, either to their friends in England or to the natives, of what, from their point of view, were acts of unjustifiable aggression. The gravamen of the charge made against Roger Edwards a short time before, on the strength of which he and his colleague, Walter Inglis, had been made prisoners and

banished from the country, was that he had in the Colonial newspapers exposed the fact that what was tantamount to slavery was being carried on in the two Republics. The missionaries could not conceal their disapproval of much that they saw going on; but they would not have been the true friends of the natives that they desired to be if they had encouraged them to acts of resistance in what was a hopeless cause. Every European who went up into the interior at that time had to provide himself with arms and with supplies of ammunition, as a matter of precaution against the beasts of prey which then swarmed everywhere, and also as a means of keeping himself and his servants in food. The story about the wagonload of ammunition was a mere myth.

To return to our narrative, the dispatch from Sir George Grey had the desired effect. The President Pretorius, who, to do him justice, was a man of pacific disposition, managed to curb the ardour of the more turbulent spirits along the frontier line near which we had to pass on our road northwards, and there was a change in the tone of the reports which reached us on the wings of rumour. The raid upon Kuruman, which was to have come off as soon as the horse-sickness season was over in the month of May, was abandoned and disavowed; and we were left to the conclusion that we could make our final start for our still far-distant destination."

CHAPTER IX

JOURNEY FROM KURUMAN TO MATABELELAND, 1859

“ ON the 14th of July my wife and I made our start from Kuruman in company with Mr. and Mrs. Thomas. It was nearly eleven months before that we had commenced our journey from Cape Town, and we were now just about half-way to our destination. The causes of delay have been fully related already. Looking back over these years, it is not easy to see how this apparent waste of time could have been avoided. It was part of an order of things which was then a matter of course, though irksome, however incomprehensible it might seem in these later days of rapid transit. Our route lay in a north-easterly direction along a strip of country hemmed in on the west by the Kalahari Desert, and by the Boer settlements which now form the Transvaal on the east. It was inhabited by such Bechwana tribes as still retained their independence. For the first four hundred miles there was a beaten track, as it had been for some years the route to the interior used by traders and missionaries. Farther on we left the last of the Bechwana tribes at Shoshong, and then there lay before us an uninhabited region for another two hundred miles before we could reach the southernmost outposts of the Matabele, a people so warlike and predatory in their habits that no one could live near to them in peace. My father had made the journey before, and there had been at long intervals an occasional trader or hunter; so that there was sufficient knowledge of the country available to enable us to take a pretty direct course.

As long as we were among the Bechwanas we were comparatively at home. They were the kindred of our people at Kuruman, and had been more or less in contact with missionary influence for many years past. Just at

this time, owing to the unfriendliness of the Transvaal frontier Boers, the London Missionary Society did not see its way to plant mission stations among them, and as we passed them by on our way we were beset with reproaches at our having apparently forsaken them. In one or two instances our absence was supplied by the Hanoverian missionaries, to whom the Boers had less objection; but these did not remain long, withdrawing to what seemed to them more eligible spheres within the Transvaal itself, where they have now an extensive work. One of the most interesting places of call on our way was Lithubaruba, a somewhat romantic spot, to which Sechele, the chief of the Bakwena, had retired from Kolobeng, after the raid made upon him by the Boers in 1853, six years before our visit. It was fixed upon by him as a strong strategic position, and around him had gathered eight smaller tribes or fragments of tribes, forming a very large population. Sechele was one of David Livingstone's disciples, and never ceased to cherish his memory. There was a fine field for work here; and it was occupied at the time we passed through by the Rev. Mr. Schroeder, of the Hanoverian Mission, by whom we were received and entertained with great kindness for some days. Here we were overtaken by my father and Mr. Sykes, who had left Kuruman some days after us.

The next stage of our journey, from Lithubaruba to Shoshong, proved a very arduous one. The distance was a hundred and twenty miles, and the greater part of it consisted of an arm of the desert, over which we had to toil through deep loose sand. In one case there was an interval of sixty miles of this sand, with no water. Our wagons were necessarily heavy; we were loaded with stores sufficient for two years' consumption, as we could not reckon upon getting any of these in the country to which we were going, and could not tell when our wants might be met by fresh supplies from the South. These stores consisted of wheat meal, rice, sugar, tea and coffee. Then there were all the tools necessary for carpentering and building purposes, including even such articles as grindstones and a blacksmith's bellows and anvil. The toil involved in getting our oxen to drag these loads over sand dunes into which the wheels sank eight or ten inches was indescribable. It was a case of all hands to work, masters and men. It was with a sense of triumph that

we at last found ourselves once more on, so to speak, firm ground, where we could hear the rumble of our wagon wheels, and where the longest distance between one water and another would be not more than twenty miles.

On the last day of August we reached Shoshong, the headquarters of the Bamangwato tribe, of whom the chief was Sekhome, and father of the well-known Khama. This was the point at which the two routes to the further interior diverged; and we were sorry to find on our arrival that our friends, who were intended for the Makololo Mission, and had left Kuruman a few days before us, had already gone forward, and that we had lost our opportunity of seeing them at least once more, as we had hoped to do. They had been appointed to commence a mission among the Makololo, a tribe on the Zambezi, some distance to the north-west of the Matabele, to whom we were going. These two peoples, the Matabele and the Makololo, had been for many years in a state of chronic hostility, and it was thought that by planting missions with both of them at the same time a better understanding might be brought about.

The mission to the Makololo was to come to a tragic ending. The journey was an extremely arduous one. It is easy to look back and to see by the light of experience how a better plan might have been adopted, but that experience had not then been gained. The missionary party, after a weary journey through a trackless wilderness, in which they had to suffer hardships almost incredible, ploughing with heavy wagons across sandy wastes, with intervals of sometimes as much as three or four days' journey between one water and the next, succeeded at last in reaching Linyanti, the headquarters of the Makololo, on the Chobe River, one of the tributaries of the Zambezi. The change from the open and sandy deserts to a region full of malaria, of which they knew nothing, as far as medical treatment was concerned, resulted in the whole party, including their Bechwana servants, being prostrated by fever within a fortnight of their arrival, and the end of the matter was that Mr. Price found himself and his wife and two of Mr. Helmore's children the sole white survivors of the party. They and what remained of their native attendants had to abandon the hope of founding the mission, and tried to struggle back southward. Mrs. Price died on

the return journey. They managed to reach the town of a friendly chief a little distance to the west of their line of route, and there they were stranded for several months, practically the whole of their oxen having succumbed to the bite of the tsetse fly, having been inadvertently allowed to stray into a district infected with it. They had to remain with this chief until they were found by Mr. Mackenzie. He, fortunately for himself, had not accompanied the original party, but had followed them some months later, and casually heard on his way where they were, or he might have passed them by, so imperfect were the means of communication in those days. The mission was perforce abandoned, to be resumed a few years later by the Rev. F. Coillard, of the Paris Evangelical Society. It has been a great success, but at a heavy cost of health and of life to the men and women who have devoted themselves to it.

To come back to ourselves : we were now to enter upon the second stage of our journey. Happily we were leaving behind us the sand country. From Shoshong northwards the country was more or less wooded, not so thickly but what we could generally wind our way, but there was no beaten track, and we often had to depend upon the compass as though we had been at sea. Our general course we knew must be north-east. My father and his wagon boys remembered enough to have a general idea how to find places where there would be water for the oxen. The country was better supplied in this respect upon the whole ; but even here we had at times to encounter difficulties. I happen to have a copy of an old letter written by me to a friend in England at this time, an extract from which will give an instance of the kind of thing we had to encounter :

‘SERULE RIVER,
September 10.

We have had one of the most trying weeks for man and beast I have known. We left a place called Teuane River on Wednesday morning at seven, and rode without halting until eight in the evening, and even then did not reach water. We began again at seven on Thursday, and at two came to a “river” where we had expected but found no water. We halted and sent the oxen along the bed of the river to a place lower down, but they returned

at nine on Friday morning, having been in motion the whole time (but in vain). We set off at half-past nine, and never halted till half-past eight in the evening, when we reached this place. You can imagine how this cuts up our cattle, not only depriving them of efficiency for our present journey, but permanently injuring them.'

I cannot refrain from putting in a word here for our native servants. They were, of course, from the Kuruman station, and had been under missionary influence for some years. As may be gathered from the extract above, they had not only the toil of guiding the heavy wagons with their long teams through the woods, but the fatigue even when we halted of following the oxen hither and thither in search of water, they themselves hungry and parched with thirst, and with no time for sleep. Yet all was done willingly and quietly without a murmur. Slowly but surely we wound our way to the north-east with occasional hindrances of another kind; as, for instance, when the bush became more dense, and a halt had to be called, and all hands, including masters and men, had to set to work with axes to clear a way. Then a wagon would come into collision with a stump hidden in the long grass, a breakage would occur, and a day would have to be spent in repairs. For these we had the valuable skill and experience of our leader, my father, who was equal to any difficulty of this kind. Then we would come to one of the sand rivers which are fairly frequent in the northern part of what is now the Bechwanaland Protectorate. The beds of these rivers were sheets of white crystalline sand. The water was happily sure, though it generally lay two or three feet below the surface, and had to be shovelled out and a drinking place made for the oxen. The banks of these rivers were steep and high, and much work had to be done with spade and pickaxe to make a practicable road for the wagons. All this meant time.

I have enlarged upon these difficulties, not in the spirit of complaint, but to account for what might seem the extreme slowness of our progress. It took us a whole month to account for the two hundred miles^m after leaving Shoshong till we got to the first Matabele outposts. There was no grumbling, in fact we were too busy for that; and the pleasant novelty of the life, and the object we had in

view, were an inspiring stimulus. We saw but little game, and the king of beasts gave us no trouble. Occasionally at night, when we were safely encamped, he treated us to a serenade; but we could afford to listen with indifference, as we could judge by the sound that he was a long way off and was evidently not thinking about us, and was not bent on serious business.

When we were within a couple of days of the first Matabele outposts, a new complication presented itself, one which threatened to be rather serious. We had reinforced our tired spans of oxen as we came along, buying some fresh ones from Sechele. To our great concern one of these new cattle now developed lung-sickness. This at that time dreaded epidemic had spread far and wide in the country southward. Matabeleland was at this time entirely free from this scourge, and was a country teeming with cattle. The oxen with which we had started from Kuruman were all inoculated and immune; but these new cases introduced an element of doubt. We felt that it would be an irremediable misfortune for us to be the means of introducing the pestilence into the country to which we were going; so there was nothing for it but to encamp for a few days and to put all the new cattle through the process of inoculation. This plan was duly carried out, and at last we had the pleasure of moving on again and of seeing once more the habitations of men.

These people were really Bechwanas, a small tribe that had been subjugated and had yielded themselves as vassals to the Matabele, rather than flee and take the chances of finding a settlement farther south. But here again there was another delay. Not feeling confident in the soundness of our newly inoculated cattle, we engaged two messengers and sent them forward to the chief, to announce our arrival and to explain to him our difficulty. We knew that by this time he had acquired some trained oxen of his own, and we suggested that he should send them to meet us, so that we might in the meantime leave our own behind on the outskirts of the country. It was still one hundred and twenty miles to headquarters, and we had to wait several days for a reply. When it came it was to this effect: 'Never mind; just come on with your own oxen, it will be all right.' Very reluctantly we prepared to do so, but sent the chief a second message, point-

ing out the reality of the danger which threatened his innumerable herds of cattle.

We were now entering a region known in Rhodesia to-day as the Matoppos. The scenery was of a kind altogether new to us. Range after range of low hills, consisting of piles of enormous granite boulders heaped up in fantastic fashion, with beautiful trees here and there growing out of the crevices between. In some cases these boulders themselves were so large as to reach singly the dimensions of a moderate-sized hill, but absolutely bare of any vegetation. We had just succeeded in winding our way through this rocky labyrinth, and had before us the open tableland of Matabeleland proper, when we were met by our messengers with a reply to our second dispatch to the chief. We were to stop at once. Our own oxen were to be handed over to the charge of men who would take them back far enough to form a safe quarantine station away from the cattle of the country, and the chief would send men to drag the wagons, for 'he had no trek-oxen, they were all dead.' Of course we had no choice in the matter, and had to take things as they came.

Next day the promised men mustered, and then began the tug-of-war. We found ourselves among some hundreds of armed warriors, fierce in demeanour but gentle enough in their conduct towards us. The task of dragging six heavily loaded wagons over an undulating country, up and down, with now and then a deep ravine to cross, proved a serious matter. Day by day a few miles were accomplished. When evening came the weary men threw down the yokes, and retired a few hundred yards, chopped down branches of trees and built themselves booths as a shelter for the night. Firewood would be quickly gathered, several bullocks slaughtered as ordered by the chief, and before the meat had time to get cold it would be broiling in strips on the long lines of fire blazing in front of the shelters, affording us a picturesque scene as we sat in our own quiet little camp. The kraals near our line of route had received orders to supply the men with beer, and this was brought by the women, who came in long lines, each one carrying a huge calabash with a capacity of five or six gallons on her head, sometimes a distance of several miles. The tired men after their meal would soon be wrapped in slumber, and silence would reign supreme, save

when broken by the call of the owls, and the queer uncanny squalling of the jackals in the forest around, which were probably wondering what all the commotion had been about.

Days went on like this until the chief got tired of our slow progress, and one morning we had a new surprise. The trek-oxen which had been reported as 'all dead' had come to life again, and suddenly came to meet us. It was at a spot only a mile or two from the place where the town of Bulawayo now stands. The oxen proved to be very much alive indeed, and were evidently out of training, for it took us a whole day to get them into the yoke and to move on a few miles; but that difficulty was eventually overcome, and on the 28th of October, more than three months from our leaving Kuruman, we drew up and outspanned a few hundred yards from the chief's camp; for after all it proved to be only a temporary camp, an enclosure in which his wagons were drawn up, with a few temporary huts for his immediate attendants.

At last we were face to face with our work, the work to which we had so long looked forward. It must be confessed that we found ourselves in circumstances a little different from what we had expected, and there was undeniably a sense of depression. Our wagons were drawn up a few hundred yards from the chief's encampment. There were next to no people visible. They seemed, what few there were, to keep carefully aloof. We were in the middle of a somewhat sombre forest of mopane trees. My father had, of course, immediately on our arrival, gone to salute the chief; but it was two days before he signalled his willingness that we, the younger men, should be introduced to him. When this came we were accompanied by my father, and in receiving us the old man's manner was cordial enough, and there were the usual complimentary remarks. Some days later he came out to our wagons and saw them and the ladies. He was beginning to show the infirmities of old age, but was still able to walk a fair distance.

We now felt that the way was open for an occasional interview. We took an early opportunity of explaining to him that, in coming to live in his country, we did not want to be merely dependent upon his bounty as his guests; but we would like to be at liberty to deal with his people, and to buy our own necessary supplies from them. He did not

seem to take readily to this idea. To tell the truth, the existing arrangement, if such it might be called, was to say the least inconvenient, if not impracticable. His idea of supplying us with meat, for instance, was to send us a bullock for slaughter now and then, when the idea happened to occur to him, and then to leave us, for some weeks perhaps, to live on expectations; or to send quite unexpectedly about a wheelbarrow-load of beef cooked in Matabele fashion. So that it was a case of alternate feast and famine. It was a good while before he could be made to understand that we would be glad of a daily supply of fresh milk, but this matter was at last arranged by his selling us a couple of cows for our own use.

We soon found that one of his misconceptions was that we should follow the same practice as the traders who had sometimes visited him, and let him have, at his own price, anything he might take a fancy to, such as our blankets, our packing trunks, our tools, our guns, and such ammunition as we had brought with us for defence against beasts of prey. He could not understand that our heavily loaded wagons were filled with things that would be necessary for our own comfort when we should be settled down to a civilised life in homes of our own; and that we were not traders whose one object would be to exchange everything for elephants' tusks or for cattle. Of course it may be thought that he ought to have known better, having seen so much of my father; but heathen chiefs are not always logical, any more than some people who lay claim to philosophical culture. To our earnest request that we might be shown the place where we could settle down before the season was too far advanced for garden operations, and prepare habitations for ourselves, we could get nothing but evasive replies. It was a disappointment, too, that we saw next to nothing of the people to whom we had come to give the message of our Master. But there was an air of restraint over everything, a cloud which at that time seemed to obscure everything, though later on we came to have some elucidation of it. Even my father, who had known the chief so long, and seemed to have gained his confidence so fully in the past, was perplexed and his faith was sorely tried at this juncture. Day after day passed and things seemed fairly at a deadlock. Quite suddenly, one morning towards the end of November, we were astonished to see the

chief's camp broken up, and his wagons inspanned and going off in a westerly direction. He himself called at our camp and told us that he was going to one of his kraals which we had heard of as being a few miles distant. He promised that on the morrow the oxen should return and take our wagons to the place where we were to settle. A little later on my father saddled up and rode after him to seek some further explanations, but was stopped on the road and turned back again. We were more perplexed than ever to know what was the meaning of it all. However, we struck our tents, and got all in readiness for to-morrow's move. To-morrow came, but with it no oxen, and after two or three days' waiting, we resumed our camp life till something new should happen. It was a curious situation and one utterly unintelligible at the time.

We gradually came to know the meaning of it all. The kraal to which the chief had gone was the one at which it was customary to hold the annual dance when all the fighting men assembled. There was a sort of religious significance about this gathering. The chief used to remain in entire seclusion for some days, in a hut built and set apart for the purpose. It was supposed that during this period of seclusion the chief was in private conference with the spirit of his departed father, Machobane. Evidently we have here a survival of some kind of ancestor worship, of which there are traces among the Bantu tribes. There was also some connection between this and the eating of the first-fruits, which were becoming available at this time of year, though the general harvest was not till later. Meanwhile, during the chief's retirement, the various regiments were parading day by day in the great central space of the kraal, going through their evolutions and singing war songs. When the chief made his reappearance, and gave the order, a large number of bullocks were slaughtered, beer was brought in by the women from the kraals many miles round, and there was a round of feasting for several days, after which the assembly broke up. We naturally knew nothing of all this beforehand, and it was when we heard what was going on that we began to understand the strange reserve and hesitation on the part of the chief; which had arisen simply from the fact that he did not know what to do with us till this function was over and off his mind.

We had come also to hear of another influence which had

been at work. In the interval between this and my father's previous visit to Mosilikatse, one of the indunas, a man called Samo, had been sent out to Kuruman with some oxen which the chief wanted to be trained. This happened during my father's absence from Kuruman at the Cape. Samo had taken occasion to visit Mahura, the chief of the Batlaping, who with the main body of the tribe had moved away many years before to a place called Taung, about eighty miles to the eastward. Mahura had never been a cordial friend of our missions, although not actually hostile; and when Samo visited him he was smarting under a sense of injury due to a raid which had just been made upon him by the Transvaal Boers. The impression had got abroad that these and similar aggressive movements of the Boers were in some way more or less connected with the advent of missionaries. There were episodes in the past history of the country which seemed to give colour to an idea of this kind. Notably, in the case of the Matabele themselves, there was the attack upon the people round the station at Mosega in 1837, soon after its establishment by the American missionaries. It had been rather an unfortunate circumstance that, when the Boer commando had completed its task, the missionaries took their departure along with the Boer commando. It was unfortunate, because it aroused suspicions in the minds of some of the Matabele of that day; though to those who knew the circumstances it is easy to understand that the missionaries were in such a plight that there was no other course apparently open to them. When Samo returned, he had brought an idea of this sort with him, and at the time of our arrival it was being pressed upon the chief, and it helped in some measure to account for the strange irresolution he showed in his reception of us.

So the weeks were rolling on and our position was perplexing and even gloomy. Save for occasional and fitful supplies of meat, we were fain to eke out our diet by catching a few fish in the Impembezi River, which was not far away. We were left severely alone and wondering what was to be the outcome of it all. My brother missionaries and I spent a good deal of time on the river banks, and I may just mention one of those serio-comic incidents out of the ordinary range of our somewhat monotonous, not to say stagnant, existence. The Impembezi, after the manner of many African rivers, seldom ran in a continuous

stream, but consisted in a chain of detached pools, some of them fairly large and deep. I was one day sitting close to the brink of one of these pools, rod in hand, when I saw some distance across two beady eyes rise above the smooth surface like the periscope of a submarine. They vanished for a second or two and then reappeared very much nearer, and I guessed that they were the eyes of a crocodile, and that I was the object of his regard. Again they disappeared, and I took the opportunity to get hold of a pebble about the size of an orange which was lying within easy reach. A moment later and the two weird-looking eyes rose to the surface within three or four yards, as well as the point of his snout, so he was evidently preparing to make the final rush. I managed to get in a lucky shot, and landed my pebble full on the point of his nose. The effect was marvellous. For a minute or two he twirled round, making, like Job's leviathan, 'the deep boil like a pot,' and then took his departure.

One event occurred during the period of our inaction and suspense. On the 9th of November a post arrived from Kuruman. It was a delightful surprise. My mother had prevailed upon two young men to undertake the journey. They had walked all the way, more than seven hundred miles, driving a pack-ox which carried their blankets and food. This was the first news since our departure from Kuruman on the 14th of July. It was an adventurous journey, for apart from the hardship involved, there were real dangers, not only from wild beasts, but from the possible misunderstandings with suspicious people along their route, of which we had some instances later on. After a fortnight's rest our two messengers started on their return journey, and reached Kuruman in safety. Very few but those who have passed through similar experiences can understand what these letters meant after our long famine, and what a delightful episode this was in the dull time at the Impembezi River.

In the middle of December came one of those sudden transformation scenes which were gradually teaching us to be surprised at nothing that might happen. A message came from the chief to say that he was on the move to another kraal, and that he would speedily send back the oxen, which would enable us to rejoin him; and in the course of an hour or two we saw his wagons passing at some

distance. We were soon ready for the move, and this time our somewhat faint hopes were destined to be fulfilled. The oxen came, we were on the chief's track, going eastward. The rains had already commenced some time before, and the country over which we had to pass was swampy. It took us four hard days' work to accomplish the distance of a little over twenty miles and to arrive at Inyati. This was one of the larger kraals, indeed the first of them that we had seen; for so far, in our progress through the country, we had seemed, intentionally or not, to be so guided as to avoid any contact with the general population. Now, much to our satisfaction, we were encamped close to a kraal of, say, two thousand people, and were often surrounded by a crowd of interested onlookers. There seemed to be no longer that curious restraint which had hitherto kept us so isolated. The whole aspect of affairs was changed. The chief met my father with something of the old cordiality to which he had been accustomed on former visits. In fact he adopted a half apologetic attitude. We were glad to learn that this was the kraal at which the chief was accustomed to spend the greater part of his time. It was the abode of his favourite wife. It was also a kraal of the 'amadoda,' that is, of the married men, who were entitled to wear on their heads a sort of ring, as distinguished from the kraals inhabited by the 'matjaha,' that is the young unmarried warriors.

In due time we were told that there was a place near to the kraal at which it was proposed to settle us, and that we had better go and look at it and see if it was suitable. We did so under the guidance of two indunas. It was a valley a couple of miles from the town, and seemed to be just what we wanted. We were formally installed with all rights of occupation. On the 26th of December we made our last trek and outspanned on the gentle rise overlooking a pleasant valley with its small stream. This place has remained ever since a station of the London Missionary Society."

The following extracts from Emily Moffat's journal give some further details, from the feminine point of view, of the later stages of the journey to Matabeleland:

MATABELELAND,
October-December, 1859.

"Mosilikatze, on second thoughts, after hearing of our arrival in his country, feared the introduction of lung

sickness with our cattle, and sent word that his soldiers would pull our wagons. The prospect did not please me. Next day the Matabele began to assemble. It was an odd gathering, and all peace and quiet were banished from the camp. Poor naked fellows with eager wandering eyes staring at us and all we do. On their arrival there was great excitement; the men all stood in a long row, shields and spears in their hands. In turn several rushed out from their places and danced, or rather leaped about with great zest, and struck their shields on the ground, some only once or twice, others eight or nine times corresponding with the number of men killed by the actor, and each received his merited shouts of applause from the onlookers. This was truly awful. Every sound went to my heart as the funeral knell of a fellow-creature, whose slaughter was thus a cause of exultation—oh, dreadful! I turned to my wagon, wishing I could shut out such sights and sounds. I felt such a strange mingling of pity and fear—of despair and helplessness.

About a hundred and fifty collected before night, and four oxen were slaughtered for them. They had made capital shelters of bushes, and very happy looked their faces all lit up by the flames of the huge fires in front of them, the meat cooking on the cinders and all busy cutting, pulling, and eating.

Next morning our wagons were all sprinkled by the 'Doctor' with tobacco water, but when the men attempted to move the wagons, they found them rather heavier than their king's empty one in which they are accustomed to drag him about. Accordingly they could not take all the wagons at once, and we had to wait till the next day. When we started I walked for the first hour and a half, not liking to ride with men for oxen, but in the end I had to yield. I was surprised to see the eagerness and power of the men; they pulled well, though many said their shoulders ached. They became quite animated over it, and the two sets of men pulling our two wagons had a race. At any difficult place their resource was to sing vigorously and then give a mighty pull. After sunset they became riotous, and the effect of some hundred voices sounding at the same moment 'Tsha!' was very striking. It resembled a clash and gave the idea of victory. Just at eight, and after a journey of eleven miles, we caught up Mr. Moffat senior.

Next day the poor men were too tired to return for Mr. Thomas's wagon, so they kept the Israelitish and the Christian Sabbath resting and feasting. Before daylight on Monday they returned, and by noon we were united once more. For the next three days we continued traveling thus by relays, and then were met by four spans of so-called trained oxen.

One span was fairly quiet, the rest a set of brutes as wild as March hares. After hours of beating, pulling, and running about, two more spans are yoked one in our wagon and the other in Mr. Sykes', but—draw the wagon? No! I had taken refuge in Mr. Moffat's wagon, for, though I am accustomed to one or two wild oxen, I could not encounter the frights of that day. At length, seeing our wagon ready, I summoned up all my little courage and went to it, but there was no peace of mind for me.

Four of the oxen lay down in the yoke at once, kicking and bellowing; they were just dragged along the ground by the others, so the wheel was chained and I quickly decamped. All this time the oxen for Mr. Thomas's wagon were in vain tried; they simply would not be caught, though sometimes three or four Matabele were holding on to one ox-tail. Eventually two wagons go on, and we remain behind with Mr. Thomas until the quieter oxen can be sent back.

Thus, though we were only two days from Mosilikatze's kraal, with only three spans for five wagons, it took us just double the time to get there. Dreary and miserable is His Majesty's kraal, but it is only a cattle post, not a town. On the evening of our arrival a large dish of well-cooked meat came down from the king. I cut off all the outside and could then relish it—for we had no other. We have thanked him, but expressed our earnest wish not to be dependent upon him, and have asked him to give us permission to remove to a suitable piece of ground where we can plant. The king assures us that he has sent men to seek a fountain for us (none of us believe it), and that they will return in a day or two. We are in great need of native corn for our men, but cannot get any. We have had much rain and thunder since arrival, and can hardly stir out of our wagons, and there is hardly room to turn in them. After waiting several days, Mr. Moffat repeated our request for a piece of ground, for the season is already

advanced if we are going to sow, and our own stores will soon be exhausted. The answer was, 'To-morrow someone shall go with you to see the place,' but the 'to-morrow' has not come.

Another week passed, and, grown tired of waiting for our promised move, we put up our tents and have partially unloaded so as to be more comfortable. The king paid us a visit and Mrs. Thomas and I are introduced to him. Of course he is given to flattery, and admired my dress and hat. He eyed everything eagerly, and is not above begging for anything he fancies. There were some wild flowers on the table in a mug, and he asked if they were to be 'eaten'! His Majesty wore a cap, great-coat, and a few beads round his ankles. He still evades each renewed effort for a piece of land as a permanent home for us. We cannot buy from him, for he always asks for our useful things which we can ill spare.

On November 20 we were told that we were to remove next day to another spot and that the king would follow. Very good, but too good to be true. We packed up in readiness, struck our tents and waited. Next day the king moved off, and promised to send back oxen for us. Next day we heard that the oxen were 'missing.' We waited several days, and then put up our tents again. Then, as though suddenly remembering our existence, the king sent us a couple of oxen, a sheep and a goat to eat, with a message asking when we shall be ready to move. Really this is impudence. He is not far away, and many Matabele are collecting here. It seems to be a large gathering, a religious feast of some kind, for the king is 'sacrificing to his ancestors.' Eighty oxen were killed.

The foliage and grasses all round are now luxuriant after those weeks of rain, and the banks of the Impembezi are lovely. But we are short of food and spend our days wondering what will come.

One of my greatest annoyances has been the rats. They have tormented us sadly at night, scampering about our wagons, eating away at our sacks of flour and, worst of all, running over us. I cannot get accustomed to them, and get many a sleepless night.

December 16.—Just after breakfast a messenger came bidding us prepare to start. We are to cross the river,

and go to our resting-place where the king will meet us. Again some of us are unbelieving. However, the oxen come, three spans for five wagons, and we spend two days getting across the river; and after four days' moving by relays along muddy ways we reach Inyati, our final resting-place, and surely we thank God and take courage."

CHAPTER X

LIFE AT INYATI, 1859-1865

IN dealing with his life at Inyati, Moffat writes with such self-restraint that it is impossible, except by inference, to picture the trials and anxieties of that small isolated band of pioneers who grimly held their ground like a little island of light and civilisation in a dark ocean of heathendom. Entirely cut off as they were from the outside world, and being dependent to a great extent upon the sufferance and whims of a savage despot, one of their ever-pressing difficulties was the question of food. By the time they had reached their future station, Inyati, the rains were half over, and owing to ignorance of the seasons, their first attempts at agriculture proved a complete failure. Much time and energy also were consumed in building operations, and the little brick cottages which the missionaries put up had to be built with their own hands. The hard manual labour which this involved fell heavily upon a man like Moffat, whose training had not been of a kind to accustom him to such work. In his second year of residence at Inyati he suffered from a severe attack of dysentery, which later assumed a chronic form, and incapacitated him for some months from severe physical exertion. When the difficulty in obtaining food of any description, let alone that suitable for an invalid, is considered, it seems wonderful that he survived.

In April 1860 Emily Moffat bore her second child, a son, who by virtue of priority of birth can well claim to be the first citizen of what was eventually to be the state of Rhodesia. Anyway, he was the first white child born in these regions, and he, with his brother and two sisters who followed during the next five years, must have added considerably to the difficulties and anxieties of the parents.

The other missionaries also, in time, had families; but

for the first year or two they were all preserved from serious illness, though the debilitating influence of the climate and the conditions of life gradually undermined Emily Moffat's health, never at any time very robust.

The so-called ophthalmia, a form of conjunctivitis common among the natives, constantly attacked the children, a fact not to be wondered at when it is remembered that in a cattle country such as this flies abounded. Small-pox, being epidemic, was an ever-present source of anxiety, especially as none of the children had been vaccinated.

But it was not till 1863 that death struck among the little community of whites, when Mrs. Thomas and one of her children died of fever.

Writing of her, Moffat says :

“ Mrs. Thomas was very young and singularly gentle in disposition. Her period of service was short and severe, but she never murmured. Her eyes looked unweariedly for the coming of the Lord, whether He appeared as the Rising Sun to that benighted land, or as the angel of Death to say, ‘ Well done.’ ”

Among Moffat's papers were found what appears to have been the draft notes of some articles which at one time he contributed to a religious periodical, *Evangelical Christendom*. They contain some interesting facts about the Matabele, and incidentally the following extract throws some side-lights on the daily life of the missionaries, with all its hopes and fears, while the frank admissions of failure and disappointment illustrate his punctilious regard for truth and matter of fact :

“ Towards the end of 1861 lung sickness broke out, having been brought in by some traders' bullocks.

We regarded the advent of this scourge as probably fraught with dire consequences to the Mission. Among all the tribes of South Africa none are more extensive cattle owners than the Matabele. The immense herds of which we found them in possession are all under the immediate control of the chief—not one can be slaughtered or sold without his permission; this tends to strengthen his despotic rule, for it makes the whole people dependent on him to a great extent—as children upon a father.

The Matabele met the calamity with more resignation

than we missionaries had expected. One circumstance reconciled the mass of the people to the enormous mortality. The severe drought continued and the people were almost perishing with hunger. To them the hundreds of dying cattle were a joyful sight, for the African savage cares little about sanitary regulations. The chief and his principal men looked at the matter in a different light. At this crisis a happy circumstance decided the position of the missionaries. Our cattle, of course, suffered along with the rest, but the natives observed that we practised a kind of inoculation which was in a great measure successful, and an appeal was made to us. The consequence was that for two or three months it was inoculation as hard as we could from morning to night.

There was something ludicrous in the contrast between the theory and the practice of missionary life, but we trust that the work was to the Lord's glory, humble as it was. The missionary in these barbarous regions must often turn up his sleeves and plunge into something very unlike a pulpit—content to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the temple. Two good objects were being gained. The people saw that we were their friends and that we knew something that they did not. Then, again, we saw something of the country, and a great deal more of the mass of the people than we ever did before.

But upon the whole the prospects of the mission have been less encouraging than they were last year. There has not only been an absence of room for effort, but a positive manifestation of a growing spirit of heathenish opposition. We must, however, be prepared for these ebbs and flows. Perhaps a twelvemonth hence I may have something more distinct to chronicle, but I believe it will be vain to look for a long time to come for wonders of transformation. The process is very tedious, and may probably take years to evoke any obvious results. The Kingdom of God cometh not by observation, but we appeal to the principles upon which your faith and ours is founded, not to your emotions."

Of this period Moffat gives the following account in his reminiscences :

"To give a detailed account of our life at Inyati for

the next six years would be tedious. I prefer to sketch its general features, with a few illustrative incidents here and there. My father remained with us until the middle of 1860, to see the mission fairly established on a workable footing. He and his Bechwana servants from Kuruman were a great help to us in getting us into houses, primitive and simple enough, but suited to the circumstances. He also did a great deal of work for the chief, mainly in the way of wagon repairs. He was an expert mechanic, and though at his time of life, sixty-five years, it bore heavily upon him, he spared no exertion which might help to smooth our way. We had some trouble at the outset with the inevitable malarial fever. Several of the natives of our party from Kuruman were prostrated, and one of them died. He was a man of more than ordinary character, a devout Christian, and his death fell as a heavy blow on our party, and had one unfortunate result. None of the Bechwanas who had come with us from Kuruman could be prevailed upon to remain with us when my father left; so that when he had to take his departure on the 18th of June, Mr. Thomas and I had not a single able-bodied man upon whose services we could count. Mr. Sykes had already left a month or two earlier, to return a year later with Mrs. Sykes.

My father had urged upon the chief the need of our being allowed to hire servants among his people, but the idea was so novel and strange to him that nothing was possible in this direction. In answer to our representations he sent down a couple of slave children to me, and another couple to Mr. Thomas, but this seemed rather a mockery. The boy he sent to me was about five years old, and the girl about eight. These two poor little wretches were at first more of a care than a help. When the chief's messenger made his appearance with the two frightened children, I tried to explain to him that this was not our way. We did not treat people like cattle. What we wanted was that men and women should come of their own accord and work by agreement for wages. There happened to be an influential man standing by. When he saw what was going on, he called my father apart and said: 'Tell your son to accept the children. If he does not do so, the man will be afraid to take them back to the chief; he will just go into the forest and kill them

there, and leave them to be eaten by the hyænas.' So I took them and they both grew up in my service; but as soon as they were old enough to understand, I explained to them that they could leave me whenever they chose and go back to their own people. The boy is still living, and remained with me as long as I continued in the mission among the natives.

It was long before we could get anything like regular and dependable service for hire, and when I look back I sometimes wonder how we managed to struggle through the difficulties of those early days. It came very hard upon the ladies, especially at times when they themselves had to be nursed and waited upon. In the course of time we managed to get men to come and work for a stated period. They were not Matabele, but belonged to the tributary tribes on the outskirts of the country. One or two of the Bechwana women from Kuruman eventually found courage to join us, and were a valuable help to the ladies of the mission. It took a long time to make the Matabele proper comprehend that hired service might be freely entered, and terminated at discretion.

There was also another influence at work, of the existence of which we in time became aware, and that was the atmosphere of mutual jealousy among the people themselves. On one occasion an old man came to me. He was of high rank among his own people, being one of the few survivors of the original companions of Mosilikatse in his migration from Zululand. His words were as follows: 'Good-bye, my friend. I will not see you again. I am going to make a kraal far away to the north. The chief has told me to go there and never to come back here. It is on account of my daughter Tlala. My enemies have told the chief that my daughter is loving your wife too much, and is always with her, and that she is getting the learning. The chief says I must go right away, and never come near you teachers again, and I am to take my daughter with me.' The girl in question was a young woman of exceptionally attractive character who had formed a great attachment to my wife, and was spending all her time with her, glad to do any work for the excuse of being with her. We never saw her or her father again.

In this and in many other things it was difficult to understand the attitude of the chief. He always seemed

friendly to us personally. He had told his people that if we wanted to hold services among them they were to go and listen to us. Whenever he was within reach himself, either at Inyati or any of the nearer kraals, he always acceded to our proposal that he should call the people together and give us the opportunity of having the worship of God, and he invariably attended these services himself. On one occasion, when I had finished, he took up the thread of my discourse, and expatiated upon it with evident pleasure. I had been telling the people that we all came from God, and that it was God's desire that we should all come back to Him, and that there was a life to come when we might all see Him ourselves.

On one occasion we had a somewhat different experience, but it was the only occasion on which I recollect anything like a failure of courtesy on his part at our religious services. I had gone up by appointment on Sunday morning, as was customary when he was at the Inyati kraal. I found him in what seemed an unusually good humour. The service was generally held in the inner enclosure, known as the 'isigodlo,' which included the chief's own hut and the huts which constituted the harem. He said, 'We will go out into the great kraal,' an enclosure of, say, a dozen acres, surrounded by a double ring of huts. He gave the word for the whole of the people to assemble, and there was promptly an audience of upwards of a thousand. My subject was prayer. I was trying to impress upon the people the willingness of God to listen to the prayers of us all. I pointed to the compact crowd of men in front of me and said: 'You men can every one of you speak to God for himself, and God is willing to listen to you.' I pointed to the row of women and girls to the right and repeated the assurance. Then I turned to the miscellaneous crowd on my left and repeated my words. I told the boys and girls that, even when they were alone in the gardens or herding the cattle in the veld, they could speak to God and He would hear them. By this time I noticed that there were signs of uneasiness. The men were looking at each other with disturbed faces. I looked round at the chief, whose seat was a couple of yards from me. He had risen up and stood trembling with rage. He shouted in a stentorian voice, 'You are a liar!' This was followed by a roar of applause from the

audience. Again he said it, and again there was a thunderous cheer. I waited for the dead silence that fell upon all and said, 'Chief, I am not speaking my own words. I am speaking the words of God.' The chief slowly subsided into his chair, and I closed the service with a short prayer. As soon as I had finished, the chief rose and marched off to the 'isigodlo' without a word to me. I thought to myself, 'This will not do; we cannot part like this,' and I followed him and sat down in my usual place near him. A profound silence reigned for fifteen or twenty minutes, which was broken at last by the chief abruptly calling out to one of his wives: 'Bring the teacher some refreshment.' This was at least a sign of peace, and in due time, but with no further conversation, I took my leave.

As my attendant and I took our way through the outer rings of huts, we saw the people sitting about in groups, engaged in animated conversation. My attendant was called back by some of them, and I wended my thoughtful and somewhat sorrowful way along the footpath that wound through the native cornfields towards my own home, about a mile away. Presently I heard the footsteps of my attendant running after me. When he came up he said: 'Monare,¹ you heard those people call me back. They wanted me to bring you a message. They said, "Tell Joné¹ that we cheered the chief when he called you a liar, because we had to. We dare not be silent, but nevertheless your words about God were very sweet to our hearts."'

With this one exception the chief always treated our religious services with due respect, and he approved of the practice we adopted of going round to the neighbouring kraals and preaching there. But any endeavour on our part to commence systematic school work and teaching the young people was effectually discouraged, not by open prohibition, but by the impossibility of securing regular attendance. The chief was getting old, was not far removed, indeed, from a condition of dotage; and there was no lack of enemies, not perhaps to us personally, but to our work; and they could bring indirect influence to

¹ Though Moffat was sometimes called after his firstborn, he never lost his boyhood name, and to the end he was Monaré Joné (Mr. John).

bear upon the chief. There was a class of persons known as 'doctors.' These were not healers in our sense of the term, but they were supposed to have the power of detecting the workers of witchcraft. There was nothing so prevalent or so dominant in the country as the dread of witchcraft. Any sickness or misfortune either to themselves or to their property was at once put down to the malignant action of some 'umtagati,' or witch. The people lived in a condition of chronic mutual fear and suspicion. The witch doctor's services would be called in. It was easy for him to fix suspicion upon someone who had been unfortunate enough to give him offence, or, what was more to the point, was rich enough to make it worth while to compass his destruction, and all that was then necessary was to secure the consent of the chief. He himself was not above the fear of this deplorable superstition; and many of the deeds of cruelty perpetrated in his name and with his consent, not always willingly given, were instigated by these men. Naturally people of this class knew well enough that our success would be their undoing. Personally we were safe enough. The chief had given my father his promise to take care of us, and this promise was royally kept, and we never had one moment's uneasiness on that score; but all the same, there was this underground influence working against our message. It was with extreme jealousy that any faint signs of progress in that direction would be watched.

We had our friends among the people; but they were afraid to make an open show of intimacy with us. Two of the chief's sons seemed to be very much drawn to us; Mangwane, the eldest born, though not the first in rank, was a frequent visitor, but he had to avoid observation. Lobengula, who eventually succeeded to the chieftainship, was another who seemed inclined to show a special interest in us. On one occasion, quite early after our arrival at Inyati, these two sons of the chief came to see me. We were having an interesting conversation, when suddenly one of their attendants rushed up to the door and gave the alarm. An induna of high rank, at that time in constant attendance on the chief, could be seen coming down the valley from the kraal at Inyati. Not another word was needed. With a hurried salutation the two young men rose to their feet and disappeared with their followers

in the forest behind our dwelling, and it was many weeks before we so much as caught sight of them again.

It will be at least intelligible how, under circumstances like these, our work made next to no perceptible advance, and that when I left the country at the end of six years, we seemed to have gained scarcely a step. So far as mere personal intercourse with the people went, we had made many friends among them; but there was a dead weight upon our proper work, upon the thing which was the one reason for our being in the country at all. There was not a single school, or an individual who had dared to avow himself as a believer in Jesus Christ. My wife's declining health was the immediate occasion of our departure; but both she and I felt that we should be willing to return, even with the drawback of physical weakness and suffering, if we could only have seen any indication of some advance in the accomplishment of the one object which would make it worth while. My colleagues, Messrs. Sykes and Thomas, remained long years and died at their post, but saw few results. Twenty years later, when I revisited the country in another capacity, there were two baptized converts only. I am speaking, of course, of obvious results apparent above the surface of things. I am unwilling to believe that these faithful men spent their lives in labouring in vain. There would be a leavening at work, and those who have followed them are reaping the harvest.

There were some other difficulties we had to encounter, but these were of minor importance, and did not cause such searching of heart; in fact, we could afford to laugh at some of them. They were incidental to our remote position, so far away from our base of operations; but it is strange to look back upon them, and to contrast them with things as they now are. There was, for instance, our almost complete isolation from the outside world, for many months together, in one instance twelve months, without so much as a letter or a newspaper. This was due to the warlike and predatory character of the Matabele, as compared with the neighbouring tribes. Northwards, towards the Zambezi, the Mashuna were the vassals of the Matabele, and there could be no communication allowed through their country. On one occasion Dr. Livingstone wrote to me from Tette, on the Zambezi. The distance

between us would be about four weeks' easy travelling on foot. There was no possibility of sending the letter direct. It had to go to Quillimane at the mouth of the Zambezi, round by sea to the Cape, and then overland to our station at Inyati. It reached me just twelve months after it was written.

To the southward of Matabeleland was an uninhabited wilderness for two hundred miles, between the Matabele outposts and Shoshong, the town of the Bamangwato, the nearest tribe of Bechwanas. There was a German missionary there, who soon after the commencement of our settlement at Inyati kindly tried to do us a service by getting the chief to send two men on foot with a bag of letters. This had an unfortunate ending, and for a long time afterwards increased the difficulty of keeping up anything like regular communication. The postbag had come from Kuruman, and the chief at Shoshong furnished a couple of messengers to take it on. Had they followed the example which had been set them a short time before by our own two foot messengers, who had walked all the way from Kuruman, and had just come straight on to the Matabele headquarters, there is no reason to doubt but what they would have accomplished their task in safety. Unfortunately for them, when they had nearly crossed the uninhabited zone, and were approaching the outposts of the Matabele, their hearts began to fail them and they hesitated. Just at this juncture they met a wandering Bushman; they gave him the bag to take on, and started to retrace their steps. They had not gone far before they fell in with a patrol of Matabele. On being asked what they were doing there, their tale seemed too improbable: that they had brought a bag of letters for the missionaries, and had given it over to a Bushman. They were charged with being spies, and were there and then put to death. Meanwhile the Bushman had gone to one of the outlying kraals, but there he too was met with the spirit of suspicion. This mysterious bag with the address painted on it in red letters, and the fact that its bearers had failed to come on with it themselves, pointed to some plot on the part of the chief at Shoshong. 'It was a bag of witch medicine.' They would have nothing to do with it, and the Bushman was ordered to take it away again, which he promptly did.

All this had happened before my father's return to the South. When he reached the outskirts of the country, putting the two stories together which had come from different quarters, he drew his own conclusions. The 'induna' who had escorted him to the border was requested to find that Bushman. This was not an easy matter, for these lonely wanderers in the wilderness were as unaccountable in their movements as the game which they were generally following. However, he was found. He took the Matabele a march of a day and a half into the vast solitudes round the sources of the Shashi River, and there, hanging up in a tree, was the missing bag. It had been there for about three months, but its contents were intact, and reached us in process of time. It was very saddening to think of what they had cost; but the poor foolish messengers had themselves to blame. Had they come straight on by the ordinary route with the post-bag, they would have been quite safe. This unfortunate incident put an end, once for all, to our chance of getting a regular service of foot-runners; and we had to trust to the casual advent of white travellers, and these were then few and far between. This, however, was only one of those inconveniences which we might naturally expect; and the long silences compensated for by the thrill of excitement, and the flood of interest when, say, six months' news, public and private, lay before us. These were days never to be forgotten.

I had one long absence from Matabeleland in the six years. I had occasion to travel as far as Kuruman, and from Kuruman down to Durban in Natal. This journey was chiefly noteworthy owing to the fact that it took place in the greatest drought in South Africa that I can remember—that of the year 1862. The first part of the journey, through what is now known as the Bechwanaland Protectorate, we found the country dry, but not markedly so. After we left the town of Molepolole, where Sechele was the chief, we took a somewhat more easterly route, in consequence of what we heard about the state of the country on ahead. We skirted the Transvaal and passed through one corner of it, but when we left that and had to turn westward to make for Kuruman, we began to find the real significance of what lay before us.

We left Linokana early on a Monday morning. It was

winter time and the oxen had not had a drink, an oversight which we afterwards found reason to regret. We travelled the whole of that day, and on Tuesday afternoon we reached Mafeking, now rather a familiar name to those who have followed the details of the Boer War of 1900. We had travelled thirty miles, rather good going with an ox-wagon under the circumstances, when we could only make use of the daylight hours, on account of the risks in a country then still infested by lions. At Mafeking there was a small native village. As soon as we had outspanned, the headman came to our wagons and explained that there was no water except in a small well dug in the bed of the river. All the stock had been sent away, and the water was reserved for the use of people only. However, he told us that, as I was a missionary and making a very long journey, I could have the use of the water for my oxen. To this I demurred, though it was Tuesday and the oxen had not had water since the Sunday. Whilst we were considering what to do a Bushman made his appearance. He told my wagon driver that there had been a thunder-storm the day before which he had seen in the distance, and he believed he could locate the place, and that there might chance to be a little water there. The chance was worth taking, so off he went with my men and the oxen.

People in England may find it a little difficult to understand this. It needs to be remembered that we were in the middle of a practically boundless plain, and that in the clear atmosphere of that country, isolated thunder-clouds may sometimes be seen at great distances, and the whole progress of a thunder-storm may be watched like a moving picture against the sky. Another thing that needs to be explained is how at a place like Mafeking, where there is now a thriving European village, besides a large native town of some thousands of inhabitants, such a state of things should at any time have been possible, and what would happen in case of the recurrence of such a drought and the failure of the stream. It has to be remembered that deep boring and windmill pumps have brought in a new order of things, and that the tapping of the underground stores of water have now made it possible to live in many places quite independently of the precarious surface supplies.

To return to our Bushman, he proved himself a true friend in need. It was a long ten miles to the place, and the men and oxen only returned late at night, but they had found the promised rain pool, and that was enough. On Wednesday morning we were off again, and had a long and toilsome drag over a sandy plain for twenty miles; we reached the Maretsane river, but it was dry, not a drop of water for man or beast. We started again early on Thursday morning, and in the afternoon reached Sitlagole. This was one of those rivers which present the appearance of a mere bed of white crystalline sand; but there is almost invariably a supply of water found by digging down two or three feet. We stayed at Sitlagole till Friday midday, to give the oxen half a day's grazing and another good drink, and also to afford our men a bit of a rest, which they certainly needed. We then started again and travelled with only one short halt till midnight on Saturday, when we reached a spot known as Loharong, where we had hoped for water; but there was not a drop. The men knew of a place some miles off the road to the eastward, in the neighbourhood of what is now the village of Vryburg, where they were sure of water. So we settled down for the Sunday, while they went with the oxen and spent the day in going and coming, happily with success, the oxen having been allowed time to graze on the way. We reached water on Monday night, and again on Tuesday, and our difficulties were pretty well over.

We had travelled two hundred miles with an average distance of forty miles between one water and another. Fortunately we had started from Inyati with an adequate staff of competent men, belonging to Kuruman, who had come in with other wagons, and were available for our service on their return. Their local knowledge of the southern part of the country was a valuable asset to us, as well as their wonderful endurance of fatigue and privation, borne without a murmur.

I have gone into these details to show what was the condition then, in one of the great droughts which recur, as far as observation goes, about once in forty years. In regard to actual water-supply, the deep borings already referred to have changed the conditions; but the grass-supply becomes a serious consideration at such times, now that the country is becoming more heavily stocked. It

is difficult to know how this state of things is to be permanently remedied; except, it may be, by the limitation of the grass fires which have hitherto been allowed to sweep the boundless plains. The grass, even after it had become dry, was still eatable, and its presence kept the ground cool and tended to prevent the abnormal rise in the temperature of the air, which tended to vaporise and dispel such rain clouds as crossed the sky. Then, again, when rain did fall the grass had a tendency to impede the flow of the water and gave it time to soak into the ground, whereas when the ground was bare and baked as hard as a brick after the great grass fires, the water ran off and was drained away, eventually reaching the larger rivers and the sea. Until a much larger construction of dams or reservoirs is achieved, and the grass fires become a thing of the past, the desiccating process will go on. On the return journey, a year later, over the same ground, it seemed like a different country. There had been abundant rains, and the travelling was more like a prolonged picnic than a serious journey.

We travelled on our return journey in company with Mr. and Mrs. Price, who were going as far as Shoshong, the town of the Bamangwato. There was an episode on the journey worthy of mention. On our way we had to pass not far from the Boers in the Marico District of the Transvaal, and we were desirous of laying in a good stock of corn for ourselves and our brother-missionaries at the interior stations. By deviating eastward about thirty miles, and through the friendly mediation of the Hanoverian missionaries, we managed to come in contact with the Boers. They were the very same men who four years earlier had tried to dispute our passage into the interior, and had threatened to come and break up the work at the Kuruman station, until a timely caution from the Governor of the Cape had induced the President of the Transvaal to restrain the ardour of his somewhat turbulent border people. These men had come to a better mind. We were received with much good-will and hospitably entertained for more than a fortnight. Our headquarters were on the farm of Jan Viljoen. He was the field-cornet of the district, and we met a good many of his neighbours.

We took the opportunity to visit the site of the old

station of Mosega, now known as Zendling's Post. The mission had been commenced in 1836, by the American missionaries. Mosilikatse and his Matabele were then living in that neighbourhood, and one of the kraals was at Mosega. The missionaries, Messrs. Lindley and Venables and Dr. Wilson, had a hard time of it. Practically the whole party were prostrated by fever, and Mrs. Wilson died. They had not been much more than a year at Mosega when a collision took place between the Matabele and the Emigrant Boers, who were then slowly advancing from the South. An attack was made on the kraal at Mosega, and the Matabele were driven away and the mission broken up. The Boers persuaded the missionaries to return with them to their own headquarters. There was a pathetic interest connected with our visit to this farm. Mrs. Wilson was the first white woman to be buried in that country. We inquired of the farmer, Mr. Groening, and he went with us and showed us the grave, not far from the house. He told us that they were taking good care of it. I visited the same spot in 1909, forty-six years later. The grave was still there in a good state of preservation, and there were two or three other graves alongside it; but the people I had known had passed away, and very shortly after this the farm changed hands, and the new owner swept away all the graves in order to round off his corn-lands. Mr. Gubbins, of Otto's Hoep, who is interested in all the traces of early occupation, has found a small memorial stone belonging to the grave, and it is due to his care that it is now deposited in the museum at Pretoria.

Another matter which is worthy of mention is a conversation which I had with the wife of our host about the looting of David Livingstone's house at Kolobeng. The favourite version of that incident, now somewhat threadbare, is that when the Boers attacked Sechele in 1853, in Livingstone's absence, his house, which was a little distance from the native town, was looted by the natives. Mrs. Viljoen's husband was one of the leaders of that expedition. One day, in the course of conversation, I referred to the fact that on Livingstone's return he had found his house looted, and his books and medical stores smashed up and scattered about outside. Mrs. Viljoen said to me, 'Please do not blame my husband and the other leaders for that. It is not they who had anything to do with it, but it was

the "rough fellows" of the commando.' I mention this because one of the leaders in question wrote a report of the doings of the commando to the President, that it was the natives who looted the mission house. He also told an extraordinary story about finding at the house one room locked up, which he broke open, and in which he found guns and a complete armoury of gunsmith's tools. Livingstone, with all his accomplishments, was never much of a mechanician. He had the usual supply of simpler tools such as we all kept, and made use of for the purpose of making rough repairs on the simple description of firearms then in vogue. We had to keep guns for our own use and that of our servants in a country where a gun was a matter-of-course adjunct, just as much as an umbrella is in England.

We parted from our friends in the Marico district on excellent terms. They were so pleased with us that they went the length of asking Mr. Price to remain with them as their minister. The nearest available pastor of their own communion was a hundred miles away at Potchefstrom. Mr. Price, however pleased he might be with such a mark of confidence, had other work to do.

We left Inyati, as it proved, finally in the year 1865. In the course of the following year the chief Mosilikatze died, and the difficult matter of the succession was eventually settled by the recognition of Lobengula as chief. The difficulty was caused by the profound mystery which had prevailed on the subject among the people generally. Before I left Matabeleland, I had one or two curious hints which I kept to myself; and it was only during the progress of subsequent events that I saw their real significance. On one occasion I had been to visit the chief, who was making a stay at a kraal called Zwongentaba, about ten miles from our station. The head induna was named 'Mbiho, and his kraal, with four others, formed what might be regarded as the pick of the Matabele army, as they consisted of the younger fighting men, who had not been allowed to marry and to assume the privilege of wearing the head ring, which would constitute them 'amadoda,' in contradistinction to the ordinary 'amatjaha.' These five kraals formed a rather powerful coalition, under the ascendancy of 'Mbiho. All this by the way.

My interview with Mosilikatze was over and I was

starting on my return home. As I passed out of the kraal, I found 'Mbiho and about a hundred of his young men sitting outside and waiting for me. He asked me to alight as he had something to say to me. I did so. He said, 'I want to buy your horse; let me mount him and have a little ride and see if he suits me.' I explained to him that I could not sell the horse, as I had bought it for the express purpose of making it easier for me to visit the kraals and to give the people the message of God. However, I let him have his ride. He took the path leading to Inyati, and kept a walking pace so that I was able to follow him, with the whole retinue of 'amatjaha.' After we had gone some distance he looked round and shouted, 'Go home, you young men: you are just laughing at me because I do not know how to ride.' They all turned back at once except his own body-servant. After we had gone some distance farther I called out to him to remember that I was walking and he was riding. He presently pulled up under a large and solitary tree in an open space in the forest, told his servant to lead the horse away a good distance, and sat down under the tree to talk.

I then began to understand that all this elaborate by-play was just a plan for getting a quiet talk with no possible eavesdroppers. He began abruptly, 'Why are you so friendly with Mangwane?' I said, 'I am friendly with him because he shows friendliness with me, and it is the same with any of you who come often to see me as he does.' So it was very evident that there had been suspicious eyes at work. 'No!' he said; 'you are friendly with Mangwane because he is the eldest son, and you think that he is going to be the king some day. But do not let him deceive you. He will never be the king. He is nobody, his mother was only a dog.' I could only repeat what I had already said, that we missionaries were glad when any of the people, great or small, came to talk with us, because it was our opportunity to give them the message of God. 'But,' I said, 'if you know about this matter, tell me who is to be the king.' 'Ah!' he said, 'he is not in this land. He will have to be looked for; he was sent away long ago. When the time comes he will be sent for, and then you will see who is to be king.' I felt that we were on dangerous ground, and did not feel quite sure that a trap might not be laid for me, and I said to 'Mbiho, 'Why do you talk like this?

We have no right to talk about such things while Mosilikatze is still here with us.' He said, 'Don't mistake me. I love Mosilikatze and I am willing to die for him, and when he dies I shall have to die too; many of us will have to die.' I said to him, 'Why all this killing? It is one of the hateful things that we teachers want to see ended.' He said, 'It cannot be helped. We Matabele are a difficult people to govern; it is the only way in which we can be kept in order.' The conversation ended there. He signalled to the distant attendant, who came running along with the horse. I rode homewards, and 'Mbiho went his way back to his kraal, no doubt leaving his people to suppose that he had been simply engaged in an unsuccessful horse deal.

On another occasion I was visiting Mosilikatze. I was sitting with him at the time of the evening meal. There was something special going on, and there was a large gathering of indunas, who sat in a row some distance away. In another direction there was a similar row, consisting of the chief's wives, and then a little nearer several of his sons. The food consisted of the flesh of one bullock. It had been slowly cooked, or rather steamed, by an ingenious process, the whole day, in huge earthen pots with a small quantity of water, the pots being closely sealed up to prevent the escape of the steam. There was no salt or condiment of any kind; but in spite of the absence of these, or of any accompaniment in the way of vegetable, it was very palatable. The meat was brought in three oblong wooden bowls, the largest of which would be about six feet long and, say, two broad. The smallest would be about the size of an ordinary dinner dish, and contained all the choice titbits. These were all placed on the ground in front of the chief. After he and I had partaken of what we chose from his special dish, there was a pause. The chief then looked over and called two of the indunas, who came and carried away the largest bowl for themselves and their companions. One or two of the attendants were called to take away the second bowl to the wives. He sat still for a few minutes, and then called Lobengula to come and take the special dish for himself and his brothers. After each of these acts there was a round of applause. As Lobengula was retiring with his dish, and under cover of the noise, the chief leaned over to me and

said in an undertone, 'Nang'umtwana' (that is, 'the son'). A little while after, when the eating was over, Mosilikatze was holding in the palm of his left hand a little snuff. The snuff was always being ground freshly for him, and when he called for it a little would be brought in a spoon and put into his left hand. He would keep it there awhile, taking an occasional pinch, and then he would call someone to receive what was left. On this occasion Lobengula was again the recipient, and the accustomed roar of applause from the whole concourse followed. Under cover of this the chief again leaned over to me and repeated his words. The act would be significant to those present, and the words especially so to me; but it was in accordance with the reserve in matters of this kind that nothing was ever said in my hearing about it.

On another occasion the chief made a similar remark to my colleague, Mr. Sykes. It was very easy, at all events, to guess what was the chief's own wish in the matter of the succession; and probably there would have been no difficulty but for the course that was afterwards taken by 'Mbiho and his faction. When the chief died there was one induna who seemed to occupy an exceptional position in the country, Monumbate by name. He was one of the very few remaining contemporaries of the chief who had come with him out of Zululand. When the chief's end was drawing near, Monumbate was sent for, but did not arrive in time to find him still alive. All the same he assumed the control of affairs as regent. For several months there was silence. Monumbate made no sign, and everything went on as usual. At last the move was made by 'Mbiho and his following. There was a public gathering, and the inquiry was formally put to the regent, 'Where is the king? It is time for us to see him.' Monumbate asked them whom they meant. 'We want Umkulungwane, the son of Umziligas. He is away somewhere out of this land. You must send and look for him.' Monumbate said, 'Send for him, then; send your own messengers.'

It needs to be explained that, many years before this, when Mosilikatze and his people were on their northward trek after their collision with the Boers, the people were beginning to get tired of the continual northward movement and to 'tail off.' A party of them fell behind at a place

not far from the present Bulawayo, at a hill which still bears the name of Tabazinduna. They had with them Umkulungwane, the son and heir to the chieftainship, and his mother, and about ten of the indunas. Mosilikatze and the bulk of the people had to all appearances gone right away northwards, and the stragglers thought that they were free to take their own course. They began to do homage to the son of Mosilikatze, and to regard him as their chief. He was a lad of only about twelve years of age. Unfortunately for them, Mosilikatze had found his way to the Zambezi barred by a belt of tsetse fly, through which he could not drive his great herds of cattle. He suddenly returned on his own tracks, and was met by the news of what had been going on at Tabazinduna. He descended upon the people there like a thunder-cloud, and of course it was a foregone conclusion what the result would be. The ten indunas, the son and his mother, all received short shrift, and the hill with its name, 'the hill of the indunas,' is there as a reminder of the tragedy to-day. A report eventually got abroad, however, that Umkulungwane was not really killed, but was sent away southward in charge of two trusty men, and that he was hidden away somewhere in the charge of another chief; and this report was assiduously kept alive by 'Mbiho. I have heard that he was related to Umkulungwane's mother, and this would account for his persistence in maintaining this theory, for it amounted to little more than that.

Monumbate made no attempt to argue the matter, and accordingly a deputation was appointed, and started on its long quest. The first objective was the chief Faku, in Pondoland, as there was a dim impression that he had something to do with this matter; but Faku put a damper upon the whole thing by his statement that there was no son of Mosilikatze in his country. On their way back again the deputation heard that there was a son of Mosilikatze in Natal, and were on their way to Maritzburg, but, calling upon the chief Langalibalele on their way, they learned from him that the man in question was a son of Mosilikatze, but not the one for whom they were looking; so they returned and reported the results of their journey. All this had occupied months of time. Meanwhile Matabeleland, under the regency of Monumbate, had remained in

a condition of quiet suspense, everything going on much as usual.

On the return of the messengers a great meeting was called, and Monumbate was appealed to as the man who all the while had known the truth. He had quietly bided his time, and now his opportunity had come. He pointed to Lobengula and said, 'There is the chief.' To the great majority of the people his decision was final; but not to 'Mbiho, who with his party retired in high dudgeon and stood sullenly aloof. Lobengula was duly installed. After waiting about three months, he sent a message to the rebellious party: 'If you are not satisfied you can leave the country; but you cannot take the cattle with you. They are mine.' To this a contemptuous refusal was given, so Lobengula mustered his forces. He found the rebels gathered and strongly fortified at Zwongentaba, but after a grim and bloody battle they were practically annihilated."

CHAPTER XI

LIFE AT KURUMAN, 1866-1877

"IN 1865 we left Inyati. My wife had suffered severely from the unwonted hardships of the life she had been leading, and it was evident that a long spell of change and rest was necessary. As events proved, it was the close of our connection with the Matabele mission, though we did not contemplate this contingency at the time. Our idea was to spend several months at Kuruman, in the hope that the rest and the change to a somewhat less tropical climate might meet the end in view. This hope was not fulfilled, and later on we continued our journey to Cape Town with the double object of getting qualified medical advice, and of sending our two elder children on to school in England.

In due time we proceeded on our journey to the Cape, leaving Kuruman on the 5th of March 1867. It was still the day of the ox-wagon, and we had the usual experience of the long overland journey to Cape Town, which we reached on the 7th of May. Railway construction had just commenced at the Cape, and one of our most interesting experiences was our meeting a train about forty miles out of Cape Town, much to the amazement and delight, tempered with fear, of our native wagon boys, who could not divest themselves of the suspicion, at the first sight of the approaching train, that it was some kind of gigantic reptile rushing on to devour them. When it had passed them by they laughed almost hysterically, and broke out into a song of praise to the 'mighty centipede.' That was the beginning of the trunk line, which has now its northern terminus (for the present) in the Belgian Congo State, more than two thousand miles away.

It was a joyful surprise to us when, ten days after we

reached Cape Town, we had the pleasure of welcoming Miss Elizabeth Unwin, my wife's aunt. Having heard of our plan to visit the Cape, and to send home the two elder children, she and her brother, my father-in-law, had arranged that she should undertake the voyage, meet us at the Cape, and convoy the children home. She was a heroine in her way; quiet in manner and diminutive in stature, she could already look back on a somewhat adventurous life. In earlier days she had lived with a brother in the City of London. One night she awoke to find that the house was on fire, and that from her room there was no way of escape, as the stairs were in flames. In those days fire escapes were not invented, or at all events in this case were not available, and she was in the second story. Looking out of the window on the crowd that had collected, she saw some men who had their wits about them. They were holding a blanket in readiness, and shouted to her to jump. Jump she did, and was safely caught in the blanket. Later on she started with a missionary party for South Africa, but their ship was wrecked on one of the Cape de Verde Islands. The passengers were happily rescued, but had to return to England, and the attempt was not renewed. She for one settled down to a useful life in the Old Country, till there came this new call, and it was a good day for us.

The children were a boy of seven and a girl of five. It would have been a hard wrench to have committed to the care of strangers children of that tender age, and it was a great relief when someone so near and dear appeared upon the scene. We should not have entertained the idea of parting with them at so early an age but for the fact that we were still under the impression that we might be going back to Matabeleland, where we should not have been able to do full justice to their training; and we could not readily contemplate another long journey at a comparatively early period.

We arranged for them to sail by the *Norseman*, which was timed to leave on the 19th of November. When the day came there was a gale of unusual violence blowing, so violent that the shops in Adderley Street were closed. There were no docks, and vessels had to ride at anchor far out from the shore. It looked as if embarkation would be impossible, but a friend in need—a clerk in one of the

principal shipping offices—came to me and said that they were sending off a boat. There were three gentlemen who had agreed to pay three pounds each, and there were two or three cases of ostrich feathers for the embarkation of each of which one pound was to be paid. The chance was too good to be lost, in view of the dislocation of arrangements otherwise involved, for there would not be another steamer for a fortnight; so we determined to brave it, though I do not think I should have done so had I foreseen the risks we ran. The poor mother, of course, could not accompany us, and she had to part with her darlings there in the howling south-easter at the foot of the pier. Our boat was a cutter of ten tons with a covering deck before the mast. The passage to the steamer was comparatively easy, as the wind was with us, but when we got alongside, and had to round up with our head to the sea, the real tug-of-war began. The boat plunged violently against the check of the hawser which held us to the ship. It would have been impossible to have used the ladder. The basket would have been equally useless. The only way was to wait for the moment when the boat sprang up and was level with the deck of the steamer, where a sailor stood in readiness and caught the children as they were thrown over into his arms. Their little lady guardian had to be dealt with in the same fashion. I managed to jump across and to take the last farewell on deck, and then we started back for the shore, which we reached after a thorough drenching, as we had to beat up against the wind. I learned some time later, from a friend at the Royal Observatory, that the south-easterly gale on that particular day had been noted as a record. I mention this because it might seem as if I had somewhat exaggerated.

Not long after this we got away on our return journey, as it proved, only as far as Kuruman, it having been decided by the Directors of the Society that we should relinquish the more arduous post in Matabelerland. This was in some ways a sacrifice of feeling. We had to withdraw from the honourable distinction of pioneers, but it proved to be the right course, as my wife never recovered the physical vigour which would have made possible for her a useful life in Matabelerland—at that early stage of the mission. Our colleagues, the Sykeses and Thomases, were privileged to spend their lives in continuous service in

that country, though they did so under circumstances which have not many parallels in missionary experience. During the long years of service they saw very little result of their work. They have now passed away, and have been succeeded by others, who are reaping the harvest of their patient labours. Mrs. Sykes alone remains, and is living with one of her children in Port Elizabeth.¹

In settling down at Kuruman, it was some consolation to know that there was plenty of room for the exercise of all our energies. My father was struggling single-handed with work which would have been enough for two, if not three, men. At his advanced age, seventy, the strain was telling upon him. His former colleague, the Rev. William Ashton, had been transferred to another station. The population of Kuruman itself was not large, but it was the centre of an extensive district, involving periodical visitation which consumed many weeks of time. The care and oversight of the widely-scattered village churches was a more arduous duty than the pastoral oversight of the church on the station. Then there were the schools, and there was the printing office, and above all these there was the great work of translation, to which my father had devoted the best energies of his life. As if all these things were not enough, there was the constant call by day and by night for such medical aid as he was able to render, although he had never received the slightest training for duty of that kind. There was no doctor within reach; the nearest was a hundred and seventy miles away.

It is not surprising if, in the retrospect, one is compelled to admit that this was not the best way to get the work done. The conviction had not then taken hold of the promoters of missions, or even of the men in the field, that the earliest opportunities ought to be seized of bringing into play the energies of the converted natives themselves, by the carrying forward of the work into its second stage. Keeping in view the immensity of the undertaking, and the comparatively small amount of agency available, it stands to reason that the energies of the native Christians themselves ought to be brought into play, and that as speedily as possible, in supplementing the work of the missionaries themselves, necessarily so few in number. The plan pursued in Bechwanaland of putting solitary missionaries

¹ Since deceased.—AUTHOR.

at stations removed from each other by hundreds of miles—and every hundred miles meant about a week's travelling—was all very well in the prosecution of the first stages of the work, but left no provision for the development of that work by the systematic training of a class of native assistants who would be competent to supplement the European agency, or even to take its place.

There is in remarks of this kind no disparagement of the self-denying labours of the earlier missionaries. They did the spade-work as pioneers, but it rested with their successors to avail themselves of the materials and the opportunities at their disposal. It is easy, looking back over the experience of half a century, to see now how things might have been better done. The plan of having one central station, with a staff strong enough to divide the labour and to make possible the training of a capable native agency, is now recognised in African missions, and there is a hope that in time there may be an indigenous native ministry sufficiently qualified to meet the wants of their own people, with little or no guidance from Europeans. This line of operation is now being followed in the Bechwana mission. There is a training institution in full operation at Tiger Kloof, near Vryburg. A previous departure had been made at Kuruman nearly forty years ago, but it ended in failure.

I may have a little more to say about this later. The Scotch missions in South Africa and in Nyasaland have long pursued this course, as at Lovedale, Blantyre, and the Overton Institute, and we see the fruits in numbers of well-qualified natives who are available to supplement the efforts of Europeans at the more remote and lonely stations.

In February 1868 we returned to Kuruman. I had the honour and privilege of acting as my father's assistant during the last two years of his work in South Africa. As I have already mentioned, there was abundant occupation for both of us. In March 1870 my parents took their departure to England. This was in accordance with the wish of the Directors. They had pointed out that he could be doing a good work in the Old Country. His presence there would be a stimulus to the zeal of the churches at home, and he would be relieved from labours and responsibilities in the mission field which were becoming too heavy for him at his time of life, for he was now in his seventy-fifth year. The day when Robert Moffat and the partner

in his work (Ramary and Mamary, as they were called by the natives) left Kuruman was one to be remembered in Bechwanaland. Fifty years of faithful labour such as theirs could not but leave a deep impression, and it is not too much to say that they were the central figures in the minds of the generation of that day. The missionaries whom they left in the country were all men of a later date, and it is not undervaluing their work to say that in the eyes of the natives these younger men stood in quite a different position. In due course my parents reached England. They were accompanied by their youngest daughter, Jane, who remained their faithful companion and helper to the end. My mother entered into rest within a twelvemonth after leaving Kuruman; but to my father it was given to spend thirteen years before he was called away.

As may be readily imagined, I had a busy time when left alone on the station. When not visiting the outlying districts, I used to be at it from six o'clock in the morning till twelve o'clock at night; but there was a joy in this which those can understand who have been similarly situated. The one thing that was distasteful and caused me serious anxiety was the incessant appeals for medical aid. I had to deplore the fact that what little medical knowledge I had been able to pick up in a desultory way was just enough to make me understand what mischief an unskilled practitioner may do in his well-meaning efforts to do something. Later on in the year I was cheered by the advent of a fellow-labourer, the Rev. A. J. Wookey.

Mr. and Mrs. Wookey were both full of the missionary spirit, and entered heartily into the task of qualifying themselves for the long and useful career which lay before them. Mr. Wookey has only lately passed away. He was an apt scholar in the language, and was able in later years to carry through a complete revision of the Bible in the Sechwana language, and was also the author of various useful publications. He had a musical talent, and had a good knowledge of the sol-fa notation, which bore fruit in quite a revolution in the singing in our public services. Hitherto the singing, hearty enough, had been rather a trial to those who were gifted with any musical sensitiveness, but there were none of us able to take the lead in the way of any improvement until Mr. Wookey came. The people were naturally gifted with good voices, and under

proper training were capable of taking a worthy place alongside of any Europeans, as is proved by the choirs which may be seen and heard to-day at Lovedale and other missionary educational centres.

Early in 1872 my wife and I left on a visit to England for our furlough at the instance of our District Committee. It was about fourteen years since we had come out, and family arrangements made the undertaking desirable. This involved an absence of about two years, but the time was fully occupied. It was still the day of the ox-wagon. We directed our steps to Port Elizabeth. On that side of the country the construction of railways was less forward than in the Western Province. We met the first signs of work of that kind only a few miles from the coast. Since then the Eastern and Western systems have been linked up. Postal communication between Port Elizabeth and Cape Town by land now takes thirty-nine hours; in 1830 it took my father nine days to make the journey on horseback.

We embarked at Port Elizabeth on the 27th of February in the *Danube*, a comfortable enough ship, but small to the great liners which now make the passage with unvarying regularity, at all events in times of peace. One untoward incident broke the comparative monotony of the voyage. We called at Madeira. As we were leaving again, the boatswain, while busy completing the stowage of the anchor, fell overboard. We were by this time going at full speed. The alarm was given, but by the time the vessel could be brought to a standstill the unfortunate man, who could not swim, was far astern. Meanwhile a boat was being lowered in hot haste. A number of passengers, well-meaning but blundering, rushed to assist. In the confusion they lowered one end of the boat too quickly, with the result that three more men were thrown into the water, of whom two sank at once before our eyes. The third, who could swim, calmly availed himself of one of the lifebuoys that had been thrown over, and waited patiently till he could be picked up. When at last a boat was properly lowered and went back to the spot where the boatswain had fallen over, there was nothing to be seen but his cap floating on the water. On occasions like these one cannot avoid the reflection as to how few people there are comparatively in a maritime nation like ours who learn so simple an accomplishment as the art of swimming. To any person at home in the water it

becomes a riddle how anyone should be drowned in calm water and within sight of help. Probably there has been an improvement in this respect since the time about which I am writing.

We reached Southampton on the 1st of April. To eyes accustomed to the arid wastes of Bechwanaland, it was a sensation never to be forgotten to gaze upon the wonderful green of the meadows and hedgerows of Old England. We found our two elder children, from whom we had parted more than four years before, just recovering from an attack of measles, and under the medical embargo we were for two or three days only allowed to look at each other through a window. Changes there were many, of course, since we had left England in 1858. It is on such occasions that one realises the ceaseless march of time and the transitoriness of human things. We settled down in Brighton.

For the greater part of the next two years I was engaged in what is known as deputation work. It is necessary that the various auxiliary associations, large and small, who make contributions to the funds of the Missionary Society in every part of the country should receive periodical visits from the missionaries themselves. To say that this is a matter of unmixed enjoyment to the missionary himself would perhaps be venturing too much. When a man has to deliver in the course of a couple of years say two hundred missionary speeches and sermons, pretty much on the same lines, about his own work in the missionary field, not to mention the incessant conversation with the innumerable friends in whose company he finds himself, it is inevitable that there should get to be a kind of weariness, and the feeling that he would much rather be away doing the work than talking about it. As the deputation often consisted of two men—one, say, like myself, from South Africa, and another from the South Seas—it would come about that when one of us rose to speak at a public meeting, the other, who may have been his companion on so many previous occasions, would know exactly what he was going to say.

In spite of these drawbacks, there was in these deputation tours a great deal that one could look back upon with pleasure. In the nature of things, the friends with whom it fell to our lot to stay were invariably those who took a deep interest in the great missionary enterprise. It was invigorating to be always coming in contact with such

people, and to know that we were backed and upheld in spirit by such an array of prayerful friends, of whom we could think, taking new courage in hours of loneliness and struggle, when we went back again to our work in the missionary field. These hundreds of kind friends remain a lifelong vision of the past. It stands to reason that as individuals many of them have faded into the dim distance. So long a series in such rapid succession must necessarily lose distinctness in one's memory. In some instances there were special circumstances which resulted in lifelong friendships, and became afterwards a precious possession to the missionary when he was again away back in the field. The missionary enterprise has a solid basis in the fact that there are countless homes in the old land where an interest in it is a part of the normal religious life. Our deputation visits were not limited to any particular grade of society. Occasionally we were the guests of merchant princes in large centres of population, and then we would move on to some rural district, to be entertained just as cordially by people moving in a comparatively humble walk in life. There was one common bond in all cases, the love of the Master, and the desire that the good news that He brought into the world should be proclaimed to all sorts and conditions of men, even unto the ends of the earth.

We left England again in 1874. We embarked on the 21st of February. It was a lifelong parting from my father. I did not revisit the Old Country again for another ten years, and by that time he had entered into rest. We called at Dartmouth, and a few days later, as we were crossing the Bay of Biscay, we encountered a more than usually strong south-westerly gale. We were on board the *Windsor Castle*, fortunately a fine staunch seaboat, but she was very heavily loaded. Early in the dawn of the 26th we became aware that something unusual was going on. A heavier sea than usual had caught the ship on her beam and swept away the steering-wheel at the stern. There were two men at the wheel, and one of the officers was close by. The wheel went overboard, and the three men narrowly escaped going with it. As a matter of fact, the lieutenant was overboard, but managed to cling to the bulwark rail outside and recovered himself. Fortunately there was another steering-wheel on the bridge, and as the captain was there, he was able to give promptly the neces-

sary orders for the connection to be established. Meanwhile the vessel had 'broached to,' as the saying is, and lay with her broadside exposed to the full fury of the waves. The decks were swept of movables, one or two of the boats seriously damaged, the skylights were smashed, and a cataract began to pour down into the saloon, and to inundate the cabins until our boxes were floating about in a foot of water. It was a critical moment, but as soon as the steering gear had been connected, the ship's head was brought up to face the wind, and we were saved from what was threatening to be a fatal disaster. The whole thing was over and done with in about twenty minutes. The rest of the voyage was accomplished without any more adventures, though there was some food shortage, owing to the loss of livestock, which was being carried on deck for slaughter purposes. The art of carrying chilled meat had not then been brought into use as it is now. We were all too thankful to grumble, and our captain and his men had risen high in our confidence and esteem.

We arrived in Port Elizabeth on the 27th of March. As we had to remain there some little time, to have alterations made in our travelling wagon, and also to obtain oxen, we went out to stay at Bethelsdorp, an old missionary station about nine miles inland, where there was a house at our disposal. The missionary and his wife were absent, but the work was being carried on by some members of the family. There was only a small population, consisting almost entirely of Hottentots. Bethelsdorp owed its existence to the labours of the Rev. Dr. Vander Kemp, who received the place as a grant from the Government of his day to the London Missionary Society, as a place where he might collect the scattered Hottentots still remaining among the white people who had taken possession of their country. The place was a very poor one, with no natural resources; and beyond the fact that it served in those days as a sort of refuge for a number of homeless people, there was very little scope for prosperous industrial development. As a missionary station it still drags on a feeble existence to-day, and to some at least it appears to have done its work, and that it would be better if it could now be turned to some other purpose. Yet it has not an unworthy record in the past. We have to bear in mind the service it rendered as a home and resting-place

for a class of people who in the early days of Cape history were hardly regarded as having any civil rights, though they did not belong to the slave section of the community. Many humble and devout Christians went out from Bethelsdorp and from similar stations, and their good influence went to permeate the coloured part of the population, which is no inconsiderable item in the elements which now go to make up the South African people.

On the 11th of June we reached Kuruman. The next three years were spent there carrying on the regular work of the mission. Probably those three years embraced in some respects the most trying period in my life. I should be disposed to pass them over in silence, but for the fact that in the official history of the London Missionary Society there is an extraordinary representation given of my character and conduct at this juncture in the history of the Bechwana Mission. On my father's return to England he had interested himself in the question of some forward movement being made in Bechwanaland in educational work. His appeal to the churches met with a ready response. A large sum of money was raised with very little delay or effort. The directors referred the working out of the scheme to the District Committee on the spot, and the matter was under discussion when I returned to Kuruman. A determination was arrived at to embark in the erection of a number of large and expensive buildings.

Unfortunately for me, as it turned out, I was unable to concur in the course that was being taken. It seemed to me that it would be better to commence on a small scale. There was a notable absence of the class of scholars whom it would be suitable to receive as students. The elementary schools had been a weak point in the work of the mission, as I have already tried to explain. But I was in a minority of one. The whole of my colleagues in the District Committee took the opposite view, and operations commenced on a large scale. The Kuruman station was decided upon as the site. It was difficult for me to approve or to concur in the proceedings, or to take a neutral position. Matters assumed a personal aspect between one or two of my colleagues and myself. I will not enter into that, as the men concerned have passed away and are not here to answer for themselves. No doubt I might have

acted more wisely, and I must give others credit for having meant as well as I did myself.

Matters, however, became so strained that I requested the directors to move me to some other station, where I should be free from being a daily witness of what I disapproved, and running any risk of seeming to exercise any adverse local influence. I knew that the whole project, as it was then being carried on, had to end in a fiasco, as it eventually did, and I did not wish to have the blame of failure laid at my door, as it might be if I remained on the spot. At last, in response to my earnest entreaties, and after some delay, the directors in London requested me to occupy the station of Molepolole, about two hundred and fifty miles to the north-east. My brother-in-law, the Rev. Roger Price, whose station it was, was absent on furlough in England, and had been sent on a tentative expedition to East Africa, in connection with the planting of the Ujiji mission, so his absence was likely to be protracted—if not final. On the 20th of June 1877 I left Kuruman with my family, and after an average journey of three weeks I arrived at Molepolole.”

Moffat writes briefly and, as is evident, with some constraint concerning the period that he spent at Kuruman. During these years he was engaged in carrying on the usual routine duties of an old-established mission station, an occupation devoid of much interest except to those immediately concerned.

He entered upon his work with high hopes and under what appeared to be favourable auspices, for up to this time Kuruman had been the centre of the London Missionary Society's work in that part of Africa.

All other stations took it as their model, and to it they turned in every emergency. There was a certain natural fitness in the decision of the directors that John Moffat should succeed his father, but, attractive as the proposal was in many ways, he accepted the post with some misgiving, for he realised—perhaps better than anyone else—that it was a position that would involve difficulties and responsibilities of no common kind.

Moreover, another consideration weighed heavily upon his mind. Kuruman was regarded as the pick of all the mission stations in the country, and he feared that his

appointment to it might be looked upon by his fellow-missionaries as due to family influence and favouritism, especially as he had only recently become an agent of the Society. It is true he had been working as one for six years in Matabeleland, but technically speaking he was only a recently joined recruit. When he left Inyati at the end of 1865 his departure had been caused by his wife's health, and at the time it had been regarded as only temporary, but his private engagement with Dr. Livingstone having come to an end, he offered his services to the Society.

Finding that Mrs. Moffat's condition did not justify an early return to Inyati, he suggested to the directors that he should go back by himself, leaving his wife to recuperate in the Colony. As an alternative, he earnestly besought that he should be allowed to start a mission among the Bakwena tribe, north-east of Kuruman, where he had satisfied himself there was urgent need for a missionary.

The conditions of life there he considered would be less arduous than in Matabeleland, and he saw no reason why his wife should not make the attempt to accompany him. So anxious was he to avoid all risk of being misjudged in this matter that he drew the attention of the directors to the inferences that might be drawn by his colleagues if he were sent to Kuruman, but they, very rightly, refused to be influenced by a contingency which should have been an impossibility among a body of professing Christians. Communications, however, in those days were slow, and the directors were extraordinarily dilatory in coming to any conclusion, so during the waiting period (1866) he remained at Kuruman assisting his father.

Eventually, in February 1868 (after his visit to Cape Town), he joined his father at Kuruman, for two years acting as his assistant, and on his departure taking over full charge of the station.

After the deadening and hopeless struggle against indifference and heathendom in Matabeleland, life at Kuruman must have seemed like emerging into daylight after dense darkness. For the first time Moffat found himself in a sphere which provided abundant opportunity for exercising his zealous missionary spirit with some measure of success and encouragement, and his first years at Kuruman were probably the happiest of his life. But it was the calm which precedes the storm.

From a material point of view life at Kuruman was one of comfort as compared with that in Matabeleland. The climate is a good one; servants and other advantages, which had hitherto been unobtainable luxuries, were now procurable, and both his own and Mrs. Moffat's health rapidly improved. Free from the everlasting struggle for bare existence, he was able to devote his attention and energies to other things than constant manual labour. Not that life was altogether easy. Kuruman even at that time was still but an outpost, and it was a far cry to Cape Town, the nearest approach to a civilised settlement being the little frontier village of Hope Town on the Orange River, more than a hundred miles away. Yet as compared with the isolation of Inyati, Kuruman must have seemed next door to civilisation.

In 1874, after his furlough in England, Moffat returned to Kuruman only to find that his earlier forebodings had been more than realised. Arrangements had, of course, been made for carrying on the work during his absence, and apparently there were some who had regarded these as more or less permanent. On coming back Moffat found himself, to his grief and astonishment, in an atmosphere of hostility so far as his colleagues were concerned. They openly accused him of having used his family influence in England to confirm a temporary into a permanent appointment to Kuruman. Nothing could have been further from the truth, and he hoped that his frank denials would serve to dissipate these unworthy suspicions, but—

“ Alas ! for the rarity
Of Christian charity ! ”

they were sown on the soil of envy, and like ill weeds they grew apace.

Writing in his old age, when time had softened the remembrance of all he had gone through, Moffat refers apologetically to the behaviour of his colleagues :

April 30, 1914.

“ It was anti-Moffatism that led to my position in the Bechwana Mission's becoming intolerable. I can quite make allowance for my brethren, who were fed up with the excessive prominence of the name and all connected with

it—probably I was not as wise as I might have been. I sometimes wish that I had held on in the mission and lived it down; but there is always the answer in my own heart that I sought guidance and was led in a way that I knew not. I cannot say that I am happy in the aspect of the mission to-day, and it is well that the Moffat name has almost faded out of it.”

Unfortunately at this juncture another source of difference arose between him and his brother missionaries over the question of the site of a projected training institution, the funds for which had been collected by his father in England.

Subsequent events have fully proved the truth and wisdom of Moffat's prevision in this matter, and the history of the rise and fall of the so-called Moffat Institute affords a melancholy example of wasted money and misdirected energy. Years after, when another institute of a similar kind was started, the Society had in the matter of its location to act in accordance with advice which at that time they spurned. But it was not only in the matter of the site that Moffat fell foul of his colleagues. His common sense and honesty revolted against the lavish and senseless expenditure, against which he fought in vain.

He pointed out that, as Rome was not built in a day, so an institute of this kind should be an affair of gradual growth, beginning tentatively and expanding as necessity or occasion demanded.

Instead of this, money was poured out like water in the erection of buildings as yet unrequired, and in providing for contingencies that lay in the remote future. But his protests fell upon deaf ears, and it was even suggested that they were prompted by the fear that his own authority and standing would be curtailed by the presence of a larger staff at the station. As touching the personal rancour that ensued nothing need here be said. Moffat himself very charitably offers the opinion that there may have been faults on both sides. It were vain, even if it were desirable, to speculate on that point, but from documentary evidence it is plain that his motives were cruelly misjudged.

In spite of some good work that he was able to accomplish after his return from England in 1874, this unfortunate controversy and its unhappy results left behind the most

painful associations. This, together with the subsequent and tragic fate of the Kuruman station, rendered the whole subject one upon which he never cared to dwell, and it is therefore not surprising that he should have dealt but cursorily with this period of his life.

CHAPTER XII

THE MOFFAT INSTITUTE

MOFFAT's departure from Kuruman represented something more than the mere transfer of an unknown missionary from one station to another. Indirectly it had a bearing on the subsequent political history of Southern Bechwanaland, and from the point of view of missionary work in that region it undoubtedly paved the way for momentous changes in the relationship that had hitherto existed between the people and their teachers. It marked the end of a dispensation that had had its day, one perhaps that sooner or later would have had to pass away, and the inauguration of another which, measured by its immediate results, can hardly be said to have been an improvement upon the one it superseded.

How far Moffat's removal directly contributed to the sequel may be a matter of opinion, but this much is certain, that on the bright sunny day in June when, surrounded by weeping crowds, he left the old family homestead, a new and disastrous era dawned for the Bechwanaland mission in general and the Kuruman station in particular. When he looked back from the rising ground where a last view could be caught, it might have seemed to him, as his eyes bade farewell to the familiar landscape, that outwardly all was unchanged. He knew, indeed, that for himself his house had been left unto him desolate, but had he been gifted with prophetic instinct, he might well have seen the sad word "Ichabod" written in letters of fire across the quiet valley, which lay bathed in the light of the coming sunset.

To explain why and how this should have been, it is necessary, and perhaps not irrelevant, to refer shortly to the political situation at that time.

The recent discovery of diamonds in the country south of Bechwanaland had brought into existence the newly created state of Griqualand West, not without some noise and clashing of vested interests.

The district lay for the most part in the country of the Griqua chief Waterboer, but the boundary between his territory and that of the adjoining Orange Free State had never been accurately defined, and the latter claimed that part, anyway, of the diamondiferous area fell within its borders. This led to some delicate negotiations between it and the British Government, and eventually, for a consideration in the shape of hard cash, the Orange Free State relinquished its claims, and, though perhaps persuaded that it had a legitimate grievance, it was, possibly, secretly relieved at the time at getting quit of a crowd of turbulent diggers, who showed a disposition to take the law into their own hands. Waterboer, having received a pension, soon drank himself to death without troubling himself as to what effect the new arrangements might have on the position and welfare of his own people. But it was not only in the south that he had parted with territory over which he had but a shadowy claim to sovereignty. Northwards his borders were equally undefined, and there can be little question that in that direction also he had bargained away land that strictly belonged to others. As a result of this many Bechwanas suddenly found themselves willy-nilly subjects of a new government. Some accepted the situation, while others migrated across the frontier and settled in what was still native territory. This led to a certain amount of unrest and heart-burning. The cry went forth that the white man was "eating up the land," and a feeling of insecurity and antagonism took the place of what had been before perfect trust and confidence.

Kuruman, being some distance beyond the new border, was not directly affected, but the influence of the prevailing spirit could not but be felt there also. Unfortunately, just at this juncture things were occurring there that were not calculated to reassure the doubting minds of the people. Missionaries who were comparatively strangers in this part of the country had taken charge of the Kuruman station, and their action in certain matters and their somewhat unsympathetic behaviour gave colour to the suspicions

of the natives. Although there was ample ground available elsewhere, the local committee selected a site for the proposed Institute that involved the removal of a native village, and the inhabitants unceremoniously received notice to quit. This not unnaturally caused some local feeling, and the attitude of the missionaries is shown by the fact that one of them actually went so far as to say in writing that the natives had been so spoiled and coddled in the past that it was time they were taught manners.

So high did feeling rise that a local chief rode in one day, with a small following, and called upon Moffat to inform him that they were going over the valley to burn down the new buildings that were being erected. Needless to state, Moffat pointed out the folly and wickedness of such conduct, and the party left the station peacefully. It was perhaps only an idle threat, but the fact that it could have been made showed how far things had travelled in the wrong direction. Such, then, was the condition of affairs in 1877 when the news of Moffat's impending departure became known. It came like a bolt from the blue, and it is no exaggeration to say that it created consternation far and wide, both among the native and European community.

Memorials were drawn up and forwarded by both parties to the Directors in London, praying for Moffat's detention at Kuruman, but all in vain. The prayer of the natives was contained in a pathetic document written in their own language, which closes with these words :

“ And he, our leader, has told us himself, saying he asked to leave here, and you sanction it ; but seeing that we are accustomed to him, we ask him from you. Our Superiors, we ask you, therefore, as children ask their father. And as we are accustomed to him, if he leaves us, evil will come. But we speak thus, Jesus says His sheep will not follow a stranger, because they know not the voice of a stranger (John x. 15). Again the Lord says, Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find (Math. vii. 7). We close with salutations, we the congregation of Kuruman town.”

When all these endeavours failed of their object, the natives abandoned themselves to despair, feeling indeed

like sheep deprived of their shepherd. Split up, as they were, into a number of small clans each under a separate petty chief, there existed no central guiding force, and it is safe to say that the word and advice of Monaré Joné (Mr. John) carried more weight throughout the countryside than the authority of all the petty chiefs combined. Apart from the fact that he was the son of his father, they had known him since childhood, and by his just, sympathetic treatment of them he had won their unbounded affection and trust.

Within a year of his departure the smouldering embers of disaffection in Griqualand West had fanned themselves into revolt. The usual senseless deeds of violence were perpetrated, and punitive measures had to be undertaken. The flames of war spread in the direction of Kuruman, and the Europeans, including the missionaries, became alarmed, with the result that the first use to which the yet unfinished Moffat Institute was put was to form a "laager" for the protection of the missionaries and other Europeans against the very people for whose spiritual and material benefit it had ostensibly been built. A state of siege ensued and Government assistance was applied for. After some delay, a commando fought its way through and marched in to the relief of Kuruman.

For the first time in its history the hitherto peaceful settlement became a base for military operations, and its usual calm was broken by the tramp of armed men and the sound of bugle calls. And this in a place where for years Moffat the elder, when on his travels, had been wont for weeks and months to leave his wife and family in perfect safety!

The expedition executed a circular tour throughout the district, and after giving the natives a taste of what they might expect in the event of further trouble, the victorious troops returned, with such glory and loot as they had amassed, to Kimberley, and Bechwanaland was left to its own devices. Things settled down and matters resumed their normal course, but so far as the relation of the missionaries to the people was concerned, the tie that had united them had snapped for ever. The old childlike, implicit confidence had vanished, and the prestige of the missionaries suffered a shock from which it has never recovered. From this time forth the natives ceased to look to their

white teachers for guidance, and politically the latter lost all hold over their flock. Perhaps the change was inevitable, and in the end may have been desirable, for in unworthy hands such power and influence are liable to abuse, as is exemplified in more than one country at the present day. Unfortunately the change had come too abruptly and through dubious causes, with the result that during the years of transition that were to follow the missionaries in their own legitimate sphere lost all effective control over the minds and hearts of the Bechwana people.

Unfortunately also, in this particular instance, where that wider power and influence might have been exercised to the best and highest advantage, he who possessed it was eating out his heart in sorrow and helplessness three hundred miles away.

It is possible, nay probable, that had Moffat been at Kuruman, the revolt, so far as it affected this station, would not have occurred at all. Had it done so, one thing is certain: he would have remained with his family in his house at the post of duty, whatever the result might have been, and that a son of Robert Moffat could have lost his life at the hands of the Bechwana is almost unthinkable.

From this time onward Kuruman, politically, by reason of its being off the main line of traffic to the north, and from a missionary standpoint, slowly declined. Many of the people drifted away, and the celebrated Institution dwindled into insignificance, the grandiose schemes of its founders having proved naught but "blown buds of barren flowers."

Some of the buildings were allowed to fall into ruins, and it degenerated into what was but little more than an ordinary mission school. Eventually, more than twenty years after, when the point of extinction had been almost reached, a fresh start was made elsewhere, and the Moffat Institute passed away "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

In the official history of the London Missionary Society, compiled by a Mr. Lovett,¹ and published in 1899, it is recorded that its failure to realise the hopes and expect-

¹ *History of the London Missionary Society*, by Richard Lovett, M.A., 1899, vol. i, pp. 606-7.

tations of its promoters was due to numerous reasons, among which the following are specified :

“The remote situation and sparse population of Kuruman; the prosperity of Lovedale; the dispute between John Smith Moffat and his brethren; the indolent character of the natives.”

The first-mentioned no doubt contributed mainly to the distressful result, and let it be remembered that this was the chief reason that led Moffat to oppose the choice of Kuruman as a site.

As touching the other excuses given—for they are nothing more—two are puerile in the extreme, while the attempt to saddle Moffat with a share of the responsibility for the failure might well provoke less measured language.

Moffat only returned from England to Kuruman in 1874, and the transfer of the Institute from its original site at Shoshong, in Khama's country, began in 1876. He left Kuruman in June 1877, by which time the buildings were well advanced towards completion. For the next two years he was living in a different part of the country three hundred miles away, and in 1879 he severed his connection with the Society.

In what conceivable way the subsequent history of the Institute during the next twenty years could have been influenced by him, or how, even in part, its failure can be laid to his charge, it is difficult to imagine.

Such a conception presupposes an inordinately high opinion of his powers, and if the official historian really believed what he wrote, he certainly offers unwittingly a high tribute to Moffat's influence and personality. Strange it is, if his opinion represents that of the Directors of the Society at that time, that they should have ignored and slighted the advice of one, by their own showing, so worthy of attention.

To those who can read between the lines in what has been written here, the fundamental causes for the failure of the project will be readily apparent; but no useful purpose would be served by laying stress upon them, especially in view of Moffat's own temperate references to the subject.

In the first flush of his anger he spoke with bitterness of the "calumny," which stands to this day in the pages of the official history of the London Missionary Society; but as the years passed, though the memory of it might still rankle, he could write dispassionately of it in his reminiscences, moved by the same spirit that prompted the following extract from a private letter :

May 8, 1903.

"Your sympathy is very welcome about Lovett's book, but I think I have got over the smart of that. I remember our Lord's beatitude. It has been a wholesome discipline which I must have needed or it would not have come."

In after-years those who had been his not too chivalrous opponents looked to him as a tower of strength. Though no longer an official fellow-worker with them, his sympathy with their work remained unabated, and to him they looked for advice and help in many an emergency, and never did they do so in vain.

Meanwhile the hand of time has dealt hardly with Robert Moffat's old station. When South Bechwanaland was annexed to the Colony in 1895, the Kuruman fountain, about three miles away, was chosen as a township and it became the seat of a magistracy.

Gradually but surely the natives were ousted, and the opportunity for effective mission work became so restricted that the Society in recent years has sold a large part of the property belonging to it. Legally, perhaps, there exists no reason why it should not have done so, though the original grant of land by the native chiefs was given on the understanding that it was to be used for mission purposes and for the benefit of the natives. As it is, its disposal has resulted in the further dispersal of some of the few remaining people. Shorn of all its former glory and importance, Kuruman remains but as a pale shadow of what once it was, and it seems not unlikely that before many years are past it may cease to be a mission station.

Even now it is rumoured that the cinematograph theatre promoter has cast envious eyes upon the old historic church, which he hopes may yet fall into his hands.

The apparent wreck of all his parent's life-work saddened

Moffat's last years ; but strong in the belief that no good seed shall ever return void, he found comfort in the words of his favourite poet :

“ The old order changeth giving place unto the new,
For God fulfils Himself in many ways.”

CHAPTER XIII

LIFE AT MOLEPOLOLE, 1877-1879

MOFFAT in 1877 did not go as a stranger to Molepolole. His acquaintance with the chief Sechele began in 1859, when passing through on his way to Matabeleland, and subsequent visits had served to ripen a friendship then begun. Sechele's love and admiration for his old teacher, Dr. Livingstone, had been sufficient, apart from other factors on both sides, to establish a sympathetic bond of union between Moffat and himself; and the former had deeply regretted that at that time no advantage was being taken of so promising a field for missionary enterprise as was afforded by the Bakwena tribe. His deep interest in Sechele from the beginning, and his close association with him later, justify some further details concerning this remarkable man. The Bakwena tribe, of which he was the chief, were the remnants of a once much larger one whose home had been in what is now the Transvaal. Driven out by the emigrant Boer farmers, these people, along with several other kindred tribes, had taken refuge in the dry, but just inhabitable, track of country which lies between the Transvaal and the Kaligari Desert. Here they rallied and for a time maintained a somewhat precarious foothold, with the Boers on one side of them and the desert on the other; but as the country was too dry to offer much attraction to a white man, they were eventually left more or less in peace, and the scattered remnants of broken tribes gathered round their own or other chiefs. It is a curious fact that just at this period, which represented the closing days of independent native rule, there should have appeared two exceptionally gifted men to add a last touch of dignity to an ancient but dying regime. These were the better known Khama, chief of the Bamangwato, and Sechele of



THE OLD MISSION HOUSE AT MOLEPOLOLE.
Photograph taken in 1888.



the Bakwena. Both had had more or less similar experiences in their young days, and only gained their respective positions after some vicissitudes of fortune. Both early came under missionary influence, and, embracing the teachings of Christianity, did their best according to their lights to lead their people out of heathenism.

Sechele was a strange mixture, lacking perhaps the strength of character of Khama, but in many ways presenting as interesting and original a figure and, it may be added, a not less lovable one.

In 1865, on his way out from Matabeleland, Moffat visited Sechele at his then newly-built town of Molepolole. So impressed was he with the urgent need for action that he wrote to the Directors of the Society, giving a full account of all he had seen and heard, and urged that steps should be taken without delay to appoint a missionary to this most important station. The following extracts from his communication are not without interest :

KURUMAN,

December 18, 1865.

To the Foreign Secretary, London Missionary Society.

“ We reached Sechele’s headquarters on the 28th of October about 11 o’clock at night. It was bright moonlight ; we rode through the town to the chief’s house and outspanned in the ‘ kothla,’ a large open space in the middle of the town, which is quite new, Sechele having moved to this place during the present year. One thing made a profound impression upon me : it was the prodigious population. As we rode past the interminable masses of conical roofs, I could not help thinking of the ten thousand mortals who lay wrapped in sleep, whose souls also were wrapped in heathen darkness, and who by some strange fatality seemed to be denied the presence of a Christian missionary. I was as much impressed, on entering the ‘ kothla,’ by the first thing I saw : a well-built church, evidently the work of the natives, though in the European style, and capable of holding two or three hundred people. Although Sechele had retired to rest, the announcement that there was a missionary arrived brought him out at once.

We were soon seated by the ‘ kothla ’ fire, and in a short time the chief plunged into the all-absorbing subject with him, the prospect of obtaining a missionary. The moon

had sunk behind the hills before he had exhausted his store of arguments and entreaties, to which I could only answer that the Directors would send a man when they could, but that the demand upon them from other quarters was very urgent.

I wish you could have seen his face full of mute entreaty as he listened to my constrained replies for one crumb of comfort he could not get. To give you an account of all he had to say is impossible, for from that Saturday night until the following Tuesday evening when I left we had no conversation which did not mainly embrace the never-ending question—‘When am I to have a missionary?’ and during those three days I spent the greater part of my time with him.

Up to the time of my departure on Tuesday night I was, as I have said, much with him, and his tongue was ever busy on the one subject. I wish I could have submitted some of the Directors to the incessant rattle of that tongue, especially when such remarks as the following were enunciated with almost bitterness :

‘You white men are a strange people. You have the Word of God; but while you are very quick about other things, you are very slow about the Word of God. You want ostrich feathers, and in one year the whole land is full of white men seeking feathers. And what sort of men are they? Hark!’ said he, pointing towards the quarter of the town where the traders were encamped. ‘I know what they are doing now, for it is dark; they are giving beads to the girls: they are corrupting the women of my people, they are teaching them abominations of which even they were once ignorant, heathens as they are. Here are traders enough—but teachers! where are they? I am told you shall have a teacher, you shall have a teacher; where is he? I shall go down into my grave before he comes; and now my people, these thousands, are going down into their dark graves because they have no teacher and I cannot teach them.’”

Considering all things, it is wonderful that Sechele’s allegiance and trust in the English never wavered, for at that time the British Government paid but little heed to the rights and wrongs of the unhappy people who had been allowed to suffer by the encroachments of the emigrant Boer farmers.

Eventually in 1866, no doubt largely as a result of Moffat's strong representation, poor Sechele obtained the desire of his heart, and a missionary, the Rev. R. Price, was appointed to Molepolole, where he established what became a thriving mission station, and it was this which Moffat had the pleasure of carrying on from 1877 to 1879.

Fond as Sechele had become of his own missionary, Mr. Price, it was a source of unbounded satisfaction to him that he should have Monaré Joné (Mr. John) as his teacher, even though only temporarily, and he received Moffat with open arms. So far as the work was concerned, this closing period of Moffat's missionary career left nothing to be desired in the way of encouragement and success, as is indicated by his own account of those his last years in the mission field :

“ The town of Molepolole was the headquarters of a tribe called the Bakwena, under their chief Sechele. There was a population of about ten thousand on the spot, besides the tributary Bakalahari, who were scattered over a considerable extent of country away to the westward, in what was practically a desert region, with scanty supplies of water here and there. At Molepolole itself there was a sufficient stream of water for household purposes, and for such cattle as were kept on the spot. There was no possibility of irrigation on any but the most limited scale ; so that the only resource available was such cultivation as could depend on the comparatively scanty rains—the native corn, beans, pumpkins, and a kind of melon suitable for cooking. The property of the tribe was in cattle, of which there were large herds at outposts out towards the westward, at long distances apart, wherever there might be a sufficient, though possibly a bare, supply of water. The larger part of the town itself was on a mountain summit, where there was a tableland affording room, and accessible by steep rocky paths. This was an indication of the chronic sense of insecurity in which these people lived. The houses, or huts, were all much alike, built in the usual fashion, moderate in size but roomy enough for comfort, circular, with conical roofs. The chief was the only exception. He had a substantial dwelling-house in European style. He had also caused to be built a fair-sized church.

Sechele was a man of considerable ability. He had come under the influence of David Livingstone, who spent several

years with him. He was then living farther to the eastward, but was eventually driven by the emigrant Boers out of the more favoured region which they were gradually occupying, and the mission was for some time broken up. Livingstone had by that time made up his mind that there could be no permanent prosperity for his work in such close proximity to the Boers. He had come to the conclusion that the only hope for the natives would be to get away to some region farther northward, and it was this idea that led him on until he became engaged in the great exploratory enterprise which eventually absorbed all his energies and occupied the rest of his life. When the attack was made upon Sechele by the Boers, Livingstone was absent at the Cape, whither he had gone to send his wife and family to England. On his return he found the station desolate. His own house had been broken into and its contents looted by the Boers. Sechele, after keeping the enemy at bay for a whole day, had been obliged to retreat some twenty miles westward, where he took up a strong position among the mountains, in which neighbourhood the tribe have made their abode ever since.

As a sphere for missionary activity the Bakwena had much to recommend them. The chief himself had, from the outset of his association with David Livingstone, been an ardent adherent of the Christian faith, and had always shown his readiness to co-operate with his missionary. Heathen rites and ceremonies had long ceased to have any rule in the town, and the chief was always in favour of anything in the way of the advancement of his people in religious instruction. But though he had learned to read, and was a diligent student of the Scriptures, he was a very mixed character, full of inconsistencies, which kept back his missionary from venturing to admit him to church membership. In the case of a Bechwana tribe, a great deal depends upon the personal attitude of the chief. There are three alternatives: the open aversion of the chief to the new teaching, or his indifference, or his active goodwill. The first of these practically shuts out the possibility of a mission at all, and the last suggests the danger that the people, in making a Christian profession, may be doing so in a time-serving spirit, and merely in deference to the chief's influence. This danger is accentuated when the chief himself is a mixed character such as

Sechele was. Upon the whole, the middle alternative is likely to be the more favourable, where the chief maintains a friendly neutrality. We can then gauge with some approach to certainty the genuineness of the profession made by those who avow themselves as believers in Christ.

Upon the whole the two years of our sojourn with the Bakwena was a time to be looked back upon with pleasure. There was much encouragement in our work, and progress, though slow, was steady. There was a class of young men who showed much promise. There was another circumstance which gave us occasion for much thankfulness. There were two or three English traders in the place, married men, of a different stamp from the generality. Their lives were not, as is too often the case, a practical contradiction of our teaching as missionaries. It was a pleasure to associate with them, and they were no hindrance, but rather the contrary, to our work.

On the other hand there were, as must needs be in all human affairs, some difficulties. One of these was a severe drought, of the kind to which that country is frequently subject. The people failed to reap anything like an adequate harvest, and the cattle were crowded in from many of the outposts where the water-supply had failed. Another trouble was that the tribe was virtually in a state of war. Another Bechwana tribe had migrated from the eastward and had obtained the concurrence of Sechele in their settling in his country. At first all had gone well; but on the death of the old chief Khamanyane, his son Lenchwe ignored the terms on which they had been allowed to settle in the country, and had assumed a somewhat unfriendly attitude. The war was not a very serious affair. A few skirmishes and some cattle-lifting had been the extent of the hostilities. I paid one or two visits to Mochudi with the object of bringing about a better state of things, and I had the friendly co-operation of the missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church [*sic*] ¹ who was stationed there; but we did not achieve the desired success, and there remained a continued sense of unsettlement and insecurity, which was not favourable to the progress of our spiritual work.

One of the advantages of the British Bechwanaland Protectorate, which has since been proclaimed over that

¹ ? Rhenish.—AUTHOR.

region, is that there is an end to tribal feud of this sort. The chiefs are left free for the internal administration of their own tribes, but in matters outside of their jurisdiction over their own people there is always the controlling and moderating influence of the British Resident Commissioner. Happily the men who have been chosen for this office have been well suited to their work, and their administration has been uniformly successful.

Molepolole is one of the hottest places of which I have had experience, and this drawback was aggravated by the situation of the mission premises—in a deep valley, and surrounded by rocky hills. My wife never took kindly to the heat. It had a serious debilitating effect upon her. Over and above this we had a serious visitation of malarial fever, a most unusual thing in that locality. So far as we were able to gather, it was due to what might be called a mere accident. A wagon belonging to a trader who lived to the northward of us with another tribe, called the Bamangwato, was sent out in charge of a native driver with two assistants. In consequence of the drought they had taken a more easterly route than the usual one, and had travelled along the Ngotwane River, which is noted as a fever-stricken stream. When they arrived at Molepolole, the driver had already sickened, and only lingered a few days. We did what we could for him, but it was all in vain. Then the malaria began to show itself in my own household, and among the natives in our immediate vicinity. One or two of the children were seriously ill, but happily recovered. Meanwhile there was quite an epidemic among our native neighbours, which gradually wore itself out. The only way of accounting for the infection was that the mosquitoes which infested the pool from which we drew our water-supply, and near which the wagon had been encamped, had carried the germs, and the same thing had happened to the natives who drew their water-supply from the same pool. Happily there came an end to the trouble, and normal conditions were restored.

But the family having suffered so much in health, we started for a trip, in company with some friends, in the Transvaal. We made a fairly long round, visiting Zeerust, Potchefstrom, and Pretoria. On the route between the two latter places we crossed what was then known as the Witwatersrand, an open country with a solitary homestead

here and there, quite secluded from neighbours, in the favourite Dutch Boer fashion. There were beautiful running streams everywhere. The inhabitants were living an easy-going life, cultivating little more land than what was necessary for the supply of their own wants, and depending mainly on their cattle, which, giving them no trouble, thrived on the rich pasture that abounded everywhere. Little did they know about the mineral wealth which lay underneath their very feet, nor did they dream how, in a very few years, their rural seclusion would be broken up by the development of one of the great mining centres of the world.

On our return journey from Pretoria we passed through Rustenburg. The district is one highly favoured by nature, and the orange groves were a lovely sight to us, accustomed as our eyes were to our surroundings in Bechwanaland. The whole of our tour through the Transvaal gave us a vivid picture of a favoured land, an extraordinary contrast to the arid regions to which we were accustomed farther west. Still, we were glad to get back to our home and our work, after an absence of several weeks in ox-wagon life: but refreshed and invigorated.

In June 1879 Mr. Price returned with his family, and resumed his duties at Molepolole. My occupation of the station had been a merely provisional arrangement, which was to hold good during his absence. This had been clearly understood from the outset; both by the Directors and by me. My future movements had to be taken into consideration, and accordingly in due course I received a letter from the Foreign Secretary dealing with the matter. But it came in the form of a request that I should return to Kuruman. This, from my point of view, was quite impossible. The reasons which had made it desirable to leave Kuruman two years before still held good as urgently as ever. There had been no change in my views as to the manner in which the District Committee had gone to work in the establishment of the Institution, and I still declined to be associated with it, or to be brought into contact with it, in the way that would have been inevitable had I gone to live alongside of it.

Indeed, some events that had occurred in the two years of my absence only intensified my convictions on this

point. The annexation of the adjacent district of Griqualand West by the British Government had been followed by serious disorder, and eventually by a state of actual war. There had been the lamentable murder of a trader, with his wife and his brother, at a place fifty miles from Kuruman, but well within the Griqualand border. This led not unnaturally to a panic among the Europeans in Southern Bechwanaland, some of whom were resident on or near the Kuruman station, and others in more isolated situations. A meeting was held, and a letter was written to the authorities in Kimberley requesting that an armed force should be sent for their protection. I do not know that the missionaries took any part in this proceeding, but at all events the letter was sent and promptly responded to. An armed force of volunteers was dispatched, and the inevitable result followed: the war spread into Bechwanaland. It did not at that time go very far, and in a few months things settled down again, the chiefs and the bulk of the people taking no part in it. It was an unfortunate circumstance, however, that the invading force made Kuruman its headquarters, and that the newly erected buildings of the Institute were utilised as a sort of fortress and occupied by the volunteers. Under these circumstances it was difficult for the natives to discriminate or to understand that the missionaries were not to blame, or may not have been in full sympathy with the action of their fellow-countrymen. The net result was to be regretted: an aggravated sense of estrangement, the beginning of which had been caused by some of the acts of the missionaries in connection with the adoption of the site for the buildings. So, taking all things into account, I had no hesitation in declining to return to Kuruman.

After some further consideration, I took another step, and tendered my resignation to the Directors of the London Missionary Society. It seemed to me so utterly hopeless to make them understand the true inwardness of the position. This step on my part was not what might be called prudent or worldly-wise. I had absolutely no outlook in any direction. I had a wife, in health by no means robust, and a family of eight children, only one of whom was as yet in a position to earn his own living. The only project that had any attraction to my mind at that time was to acquire a farm on the Transvaal border, and

to make it a kind of native location, where I could gather around me a number of the people and carry on missionary work on my own lines. The one and conclusive obstacle to this project was the absolute want of means, either to acquire the necessary ground, or to pay my way until such time as the undertaking might be made self-supporting.

To recur to the question of Kuruman, I was not long before I received tangible proof of the fact that I had done the right thing in refusing to return to that station. A letter was addressed to the Directors, from Kuruman, of which a copy was sent to me, objecting *in toto* to my return thither. The reasons assigned were mainly personal, and of such a nature that the perusal of them to-day would do little more than raise a smile. Though in themselves of no weight, yet they were an indication of the feeling that lay behind them, a feeling which would have had to be reckoned with, which, with the best intentions on my part, would have made my position at Kuruman difficult, if not impossible. As to my position on that point, I have never had a moment's hesitation as to the rightness of the step in refusing to return.

With regard to my retirement from the service of the Society, there must, of course, remain a lifelong regret. It was no easy matter to break off relations with old friends, with whom I had been associated in a work so sacred, and so near to the spirit of the Master Himself. To this day I am persuaded that the Directors had not fully grasped the true merits of the case. All that has happened since has gone to confirm my conviction that I did right in opposing the line that was taken by the District Committee in establishing the Institution; a line that was bound to end, as it has done, in failure, and in the wasteful expenditure of a large sum of money, and in a distinct setback to the whole work of the Society in that district. Personally, the world was now all before me where to choose; and there followed several years of vicissitude and perplexity. Through all that trying time I have to thank God that I had by my side a brave and a wise partner, who took her full share of the burden of a desultory life, with all its perplexities and disappointments, but not without its gleams of sunshine."



PART III
GOVERNMENT SERVICE, 1880-1896

CHAPTER XIV

THE CIVIL SERVANT

To forsake, or to appear to forsake, a worthy cause sometimes calls for the highest moral courage. Such a course, when it does violence to all the deepest feelings of the heart, may for that reason be difficult enough to follow, but in the background there lies that which makes it even harder. He who leaves his comrades must be prepared to face the charge of being a renegade, one who, having put his hand to the plough, has looked back. This cup of bitterness Moffat had to drink, for there were not a few who shook their heads and pointed the finger of scorn when he ceased, in name at least, to be a missionary.

The sting of the reproach lay in this, that in quitting it he had left his heart behind him in the mission field. Yet he never once doubted that his path had been set for him by the Master whom he served.

Concerning this aspect of the question he wrote to his father during his second term of service under Government :

June 4, 1883.

“ You seem still to be regretting what you consider my peculiar position. It is natural, but I do not feel as you do about this. I have no wish to come under the regime of a missionary society again. . . . But it is my hope, if I am able to hold on in my present calling, to which I am perfectly certain God has called me, that the time will come when I shall be able to help and not to hinder missionaries, not only by open co-operation, but by showing that political and magisterial duties can be gone about in a godly fashion. As to actual preaching, I have nearly as much of that as I ever had, and with the satisfaction of feeling that I am not paid for it. It is true the situation

has involved, and still does involve, a great deal of caution and self-constraint, but what useful position does not? I have had to walk circumspectly and to suffer since I came to Basutoland, but it has been child's-play as compared with the last five years of my life under the Society. It was the appointed road, and I shall some day be able to see clearly enough to feel thankful to God for it, but at present it is a horrible remembrance to which the present is bliss itself."

But as the years passed he was to learn that an even rougher path, and a sterner fight than any he had yet waged, awaited him in his career as a Government official. Later on, therefore, we find him looking back wistfully and almost regretfully to the more congenial surroundings of his former life, when he writes :

" I would just as soon, if not rather, be in the missionary work again, for however stupid and pig-headed Directors may be, God is more obviously present at the back of their work than in this, and helps them to do some good as the sum total of their well-meaning blunders."

The truth of this cannot be questioned, for Governments, when not actually immoral—a state of affairs not unknown in human history—may as a general rule be described as simply non-moral, in the sense that there has never yet existed one composed of men who collectively, whatever they may have done individually, sought first the kingdom of righteousness and justice; if such a consummation should ever be achieved, surely the golden age will have dawned upon the earth.

Not that it is suggested that politicians, and those who form the executive of Government from the highest to the lowest, are on the average worse than other men, but it is indisputable that the atmosphere of the public service breeds habits of thought and conduct unknown in other walks of life. Its influence is felt even by those who do not belong to it when they come into business relations with it, for we find that people who pride themselves on their honesty will without a blush defraud that impersonal entity the Government. Not only so, but in commercial and social life a man sooner or later finds his level, which

must not be below a certain point if he aspires to keep a foothold. In Government service this does not hold good. The question of levels is an entirely artificial one, and there is little risk of an individual's losing ground on the score of incapacity or even dishonesty.

Into this, to him unfamiliar, world of officialdom came Moffat at the age of forty-five, in many ways the most unsuitable of men for such a life. Of that habit of mind that by early training has become habituated to "terminological inexactitudes," of that mainspring of action that inculcates the shelving of responsibility, of that pandering to the instinct of self-preservation that leads men to see only what they wish to see, and bids them not to look for trouble—as the saying goes—of all this he knew nothing. Instead, he brought with him a lofty standard of rectitude, an inflexible devotion to duty, and an utter disregard of personal consequences when the principles of justice were concerned.

It is no matter for surprise, therefore, that his official life resolved itself for the most part into one long conflict with those who were his superiors and colleagues. To them it must have been at times a strange and disconcerting experience to have to deal with one whom it was impossible to drive along a crooked path.

Certain it is that, if he accomplished nothing else in the course of his official career, his very presence was enough sometimes to act as a deterrent when mischief was afoot.

The great Rhodes once caused a flutter in the dovecots of public opinion by sneering at what he called the "unctuous rectitude" of his fellow-countrymen, on which he placed so little reliance that he gave it as his opinion that "every man has his price."

It was a piece of worldly philosophy more appropriate, perhaps, to the world of finance to which he was accustomed; but, fortunately for the world in general, there are men who set a higher value upon themselves than any which can be estimated in terms of gold or diamonds, and at least once in the course of his experience Rhodes did not fail to meet one of such a breed.

To Moffat the price was offered. Not crudely, not specifically, but by subtle suggestion and inference, and it met with the response which it deserved. Had it been otherwise, success and earthly honour might have been his

portion. Instead, on reaching the age of sixty, when a civil servant may be called upon to resign, he was quietly shelved, though still in full vigour and at a time when his ripe experience and knowledge might have been of inestimable value to his country.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRANSVAAL, 1880-1881

IN his first search for employment after leaving the London Missionary Society, Moffat had no thought of anything except missionary or ministerial work of some kind, and several possible appointments soon presented themselves. But he was to learn that Christians are apt to look with some suspicion on one who has wandered from his allotted field for reasons best known only to himself. They argue, on a priori principles, that in a dispute between one and many the balance of probability is all in favour of the latter, and among the Scotch the "stickit minister" has become almost proverbial as synonymous with failure. It must be remembered also that rumour and misrepresentation had already been busy with Moffat's name, and on arriving at Graham's Town he learnt from one minister that the story, as it had reached him, was to the effect that "John Moffat had left the Missionary Society because the Directors had refused to appoint him to his father's old station at Kuruman."

In the face of every disappointment, and as each likely path closed against him, he fell back with calm assurance on his belief that in due course the finger of Providence would point out the way.

Meanwhile his slender resources were ebbing swiftly away, and nothing but his strong faith could have kept him from despair.

"We are very tired," he writes, after some weeks in Graham's Town, "of the protracted suspense, and our hearts are pained by the growing conviction that we are the objects of calumny and suspicion. It does not take me by surprise; it is what I counted upon, but still it is painful.

Do not suppose I am losing faith! I believe that it is all right, and that light will break in where it is darkest.

The behaviour of the Directors of the Society has utterly disgusted me. I am willing to suppose that their motives are the best, I must be allowed to think differently of their conduct; but, of course, this is a distinction which does not afford much satisfaction to the sufferer, for it makes little practical difference to him whether the treatment to which he has been subjected has been caused by good or evil motives. I am credibly informed that one of them has expressed the opinion that I have no missionary spirit, in fact that I only wanted an excuse to get out of the field."

Eventually he received a very hearty call from an Independent Coloured Congregation in Cradock, and this he would have accepted had it not been that he was already in communication with the Transvaal Government, which had offered him an appointment as Native Commissioner on the north-west border. At the outset he had refused it, but on its being renewed he did not feel justified in turning away from what looked like an obvious duty. Concerning this he wrote to his father:

GRAHAM'S TOWN,
July 22, 1880.

"I have promised to go to Cradock if not wanted by the Transvaal, but at present there is every prospect of my being wanted, and that to occupy a position of no small importance to the Bechwana people. It is only this consideration and the dread of some man's being appointed who neither knows nor cares for the Bechwana that induces me to lend an ear to the overtures of the Government."

September 22, 1880.

"It is some comfort to me to find that my entry into Government service is not viewed with disfavour by those whose opinion I value. While quite clear on the question of duty, I was prepared to find the thing looked at shyly by others. Much as I should have liked Cradock, or the Scotch Mission, it would have seemed like a breaking off of the old life with a new language to learn, but now I seem to have gone back into old familiar grooves, except that the grooves are much wider, and I never felt myself more really a missionary than now."

In accepting this post, therefore, Moffat firmly believed that he was following what he regarded as a Divine call, and a few days later he left for the Transvaal, travelling this time via Natal, his wife meanwhile remaining in Graham's Town to form a home for the children while at school.

He soon discovered that it was no easy path upon which he had entered, as the following letter to his sister shows :

PRETORIA,
August 24, 1880.

“ My reason for refusing the Commissionership when first offered was that I saw no way of living on the salary. I was afterwards persuaded to change, my heart also pleading for the Bechwana. I am just feeling now that my former fears were not unfounded. After cajoling me into coming and making no end of a fuss about what I am expected to do, they turn round and show themselves barbarously stingy about money matters. Nevertheless, I have put myself into the hands of God. He is trying my faith, and it seems He intends me to be a beggar all my days ; but if such be His Will I will try to suffer it with patience, content if thus He will have me serve the Bechwana. I judge that my father approves of the step I have taken, and this will not be a light consideration when I am overcome with the difficulties of the situation. They are very great, and are coming upon me like an armed man. If anybody thinks I am elated they are very much mistaken. As far as choice goes I should have taken Cradock. The path before me seems to be the path of duty, but I shall have to tread it with bleeding feet.”

There is little doubt that he owed his appointment largely to the good offices and influence of Mr. S. Melvill, the then Surveyor-General in the Transvaal. While at Molepolole Moffat had accompanied Sechele as interpreter to a meeting with Mr. Melvill near the border, when questions of boundaries were being discussed. They had spent some days together, and the acquaintance thus begun had ripened into mutual respect and esteem. Mr. Melvill had been quick to see how valuable the services of a man like Moffat might be in dealing with the natives. The policy that prompted his selection for this post was a wise one,

and it is safe to say that, had successive Governments in South Africa earlier recognised its force, many of the native wars and risings would not have occurred.

The natives, unless under the leadership of a truculent chief, as a rule do not wish to fight the white man. As often as not they are goaded into hostility or revolt simply owing to the absence of anyone who can act as a suitable and wise intermediary between them and the authorities.

In this, his first term of Government service, Moffat was particularly happy in his relations with his immediate superiors, men like Henrique Shepstone, the head of his department, and the administrator, Colonel Sir Owen Lanyon, the "choleric colonel," as he speaks of him in one of his letters, but a man whom, in spite of a somewhat short temper, Moffat found eminently just, honest, and straightforward. So far as the results of his work were concerned, it all ended in bitter disappointment. What little good he accomplished during his short tenure of office as Native Commissioner went by the board, and it is melancholy to reflect how different the course of history might have been for the natives of the Transvaal, apart from all else, had it not been for that great political blunder of the century, the misguided retrocession of the Transvaal. But alas for these, the right of self-determination, of which now we hear so much, was as yet in the future, and it was still possible for a doctrinaire statesman, with one eye on the polls, to hand over with a stroke of the pen thousands of human beings, like dumb driven cattle, from one Government to another!

Of the humble part which he himself played as one of the minor actors in that dark tragedy, let Moffat tell in his own words :

"I left Molepolole with my family at the end of August 1879. We travelled into the Marico district of the Transvaal, and accepted the kind hospitality of our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Taylor, who had a farm near to the village of Zeerust. It was indeed a great boon to have a resting-place of this kind whilst I was still pursuing my quest for some opening which would enable me to remain in that part of the country, and to keep up my connection with the native work in some form or another. This opening, however, did not seem likely to present itself, and there was nothing for it but to move on to one of the larger centres

of population ; so at the end of the year we made a start for Graham's Town. It was a place where there were good educational advantages, which was a matter to be taken into account with my large family. My eldest son was already in that neighbourhood, having been taken as a farm apprentice by Mr. Robert Pringle, of Lynedoch, near Bedford ; and this was an additional force to draw us in that direction.

Early in September we bade farewell to our friends the Taylors, who had for several months made us feel that our home was with them, and whose consideration for us under somewhat trying circumstances we could never forget. We travelled in what was then the only available way, in our ox-wagon, and it took us two months to reach Graham's Town. To-day the same ground can be easily covered in about three days by rail ; and I suppose we have not yet reached the limit of possibilities which are now presenting themselves in the way of air flights. Still, we were familiar with the old ox-wagon, and there was much upon the way to interest us. We made many friends in the towns through which we passed. Nearly all those with whom we formed or renewed ties of friendship have now passed away in the ceaseless course of time. Our way lay through Kimberley, which had then advanced not far beyond the condition of a mere mining camp. Then we had Philippolis, Colesberg, Cradock, and Bedford.

We settled down as best we could under the circumstances in Graham's Town, and I had for some months the experience of the man who is ' looking about for something to do,' or, to put it in more suitable language, who is waiting to see in what direction the path of duty may open to him. Not but what various courses suggested themselves, but there were many considerations to be taken into account which made a decision difficult. I found in particular a warm welcome in a somewhat unexpected quarter. The Rev. J. A. Chalmers, the Presbyterian minister in Graham's Town, and Dr. Stewart, of Lovedale, interested themselves on my behalf with such goodwill that it seemed very likely at one time that I might have joined the mission in the Transkei, if it had not been for the fact that in the month of July I received from the Transvaal Administration the offer of an appointment as Native Commissioner on their western border. The prospect was too attractive to be

rejected. It would take me back to the very people with whom I had spent nearly all my missionary life, and with whose language and history I was familiar. The annexation of the Transvaal by the British Government was quite recent, an affair of only a few months before, and a totally new departure was being made in the attitude towards the natives. On the 11th of August I started for Pretoria, leaving my wife and family in Graham's Town. From Pretoria I proceeded to the westward, and entered upon what was to be the sphere of my duties. It was very extensive and the work was entirely new, so that I had no precedents to guide me. I found it expedient to spend nearly the whole of my time in making a comprehensive visitation of the whole district which was to be the sphere of my duties. I made the village of Zeerust my headquarters, but I really lived in my ox-wagon for months together. There were no public conveyances to speak of; I had to visit mainly the native villages along the western border, and in some instances outside of it. It was convenient to be independent of any accommodation but such as was afforded by my own wagon. It was a kind of life to which I had been well accustomed, and from my point could not be called uncomfortable. A native wagon driver and leader formed the whole of my establishment. In this way I was able to spend several days at a time at the places to which my duties took me, and that on an entirely independent footing. The work itself was to me full of interest.

The attitude of the Boers to the natives whose country they had occupied, as they considered, by the right of conquest, may be summed up in a few words. The Boers were the owners of the land. The natives were permitted to remain on the ground, with the occupation of a fair amount of space suitable for pastoral and agricultural purposes: and with the understanding that when their services were required by their Boer neighbours, they must be prepared to turn out in full force and do the work. The payment of anything in the shape of wages did not come into consideration at all. For the time being this rough-and-ready arrangement was practicable. In plain language, this was just another form of serfdom. Instances of flagrant cruelty or personal violence were not common but if at any time such a thing occurred, there was no court to which the native could appeal with any chance of success.

The country was wide and fertile, and things could go on on this footing quietly enough for a time, as the natives were for the most part a peaceful and submissive race. It was inevitable, however, that as the white population increased by the advent of new settlers, difficulties should arise. Many of the new-comers, who were not themselves Boers, were even more exacting. Then there were border difficulties due to the presence all along and just outside of the western frontier of Bechwana tribes which still maintained their independence.

My work was extensive and varied, and full of hopeful interest. Upon the whole Boers with whom I had to deal were not unreasonable in their demands, and there was an optimistic feeling among the natives themselves. I had the advantage, too, of the goodwill and sympathy of the men at headquarters, so that the difficulties of a somewhat complicated situation were reduced to a minimum. There was another cloud on the horizon, however. Things had not settled down to complete tranquillity in regard to the relations of the Boers themselves. There was a disaffected section of the community. I may say with the utmost confidence that there was another and a not inconsiderable portion of the Boer population who were quite satisfied with the British administration. I say this on the strength of my own personal intercourse with them; for in all my movements about a wide extent of the country, I had made a point of keeping in touch with the leading men; and when the crisis came, I make bold to say that, but for the irresolution of the Home Government, a determined assertion of authority would have met with the sympathy and cooperation of a large number of the Boers themselves.

In the month of December I was returning to Zeerust from a journey outside of the border, and on arriving at the farm of my friends the Taylors, I learned that postal communication had ceased, and that on the following day, the 24th of December, the Boers would come into the village in force. Knowing that the Landdrost—that is, the Resident Magistrate—was not a man whose loyalty could be relied upon, and that the small population of the village—almost exclusively British—would be somewhat at a loss to know what to do, I felt that it was my duty to go into the village. I left at a friend's house the cart and horses which I had borrowed, and walked down to the main street

where the Government offices were, to find there a somewhat animated scene. A large party of armed and mounted Boers was ranged in front of the magistrate's office. The men who lived in the village, and were with few exceptions British in their sympathies, were collected and cooped up on the stoep,¹ and were being interrogated by the Boer leader, a man of the name of Jan Viljoen. Happily they had kept their heads, and were taking things quietly. They were quite unarmed.

My arrival evidently caused some excitement, as inquiries had already been made as to my whereabouts. I was sorry to see that a good many of the Boers were under the influence of liquor. I was ordered to take my stand in the middle of the street, in front of the commandant, who made formal inquiries as to my official status and the nature of my duties. He then ordered me to resign my commission, and to take the position of a private individual, and if I did not accept the new regime, at all events to pledge myself to be entirely neutral and passive. I gave him my reply, the only thing to be said under the circumstances, that it was not possible for me to do anything of the sort; that I had received my commission from Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and that I could only give it back to her. So far there had been profound silence, but suddenly a shout was raised by the more turbulent elements in the crowd; 'He is insolent, let him die; blood has already been shed, let his follow.' Four of the younger men dismounted, charged their rifles and ranged themselves in front of me. The old commandant seemed in a maze and had drawn backwards. I do not remember any other occasion in my life when the end seemed to be so near. I was mercifully kept from any real sense of fear. I only wondered what the bullets would feel like, or whether I should feel them at all. The men seemed to hesitate; it appeared that there were two Boers standing some distance behind me and in the line of fire. They were so absorbed in some private squabble of their own that they paid no heed to the shouts that were addressed to them to get out of the way. This I did not know till afterwards.

One of my would-be executioners came up to me and gave me a blow with his fist on the side of the head, but I just

¹ The low platform suggesting a roofless verandah, which is a common feature of many of the older houses in South Africa.—AUTHOR.

stood still. He then began jabbing me in the chest with the butt-end of his rifle. I thought that he meant to knock me down, but I found afterwards that what he intended was to shift me farther to the right, so that they might have a clear range. I stood my ground, however, and called out to the commandant that if I was to die, let it be promptly, and not be knocked about like this. He seemed to wake up out of a trance, and suddenly rushed forward his horse between me and my assailants and shouted: 'You fellows, if you kill this man you will bring all the black tribes down on top of us!' 'Well,' said they, 'then let him be put in gaol.' To this there was a gentle murmur of approval, and I was to go at once to prison. At this juncture two of my English friends, Messrs. Spranger and Southwood, came forward and asked that they might be allowed to stand surety. This was agreed to, and I was taken before the magistrate, who had already accepted office under the Boers, and my friends were bound over for five hundred pounds each. Mr. Spranger took me with him to his home, and he and his wife kept me as their guest for the next four months: that is, as long as the war lasted. Another life-long memory of kindness.

There being nothing more for them to do, the Boers dispersed to their farms, the inhabitants of the village not having been in any way seriously molested or inconvenienced: and the relations between the Boers and their English neighbours remained fairly friendly, which was due in a large measure to the prudence and non-committal attitude of the latter. There was no other alternative open to them. Something must also be said for the fact that there were a good many of the Boers who were but half-hearted in their own cause.

The next three months I was nominally a prisoner, but out on bail. After the events related above the Boers having dispersed to their homes, the ordinary routine of village life seemed likely to continue as if nothing in particular were on foot. I went out with my friends

¹ Later, when the chief Montsiwa learned what was going on in Zeerust, he wrote a letter to the Boer commandant of the district informing him that, if a single loyal subject of the Queen in Zeerust were injured, he would at once move in his whole force and interfere. He also wrote to the Government offering to go to the assistance of the beleaguered force at Potchefstrom, but his letter was intercepted. After the war the Boers did not forget these facts.—AUTHOR.

the Sprangers and spent the evening with the Taylors, at their farm eight miles away, it being Christmas Day. In the course of a few days, however, possibly owing to rumours which had got about, the attitude of the Boers underwent a change. Some men were told off and a small camp was formed, and a guard placed on each of the principal thoroughfares leading out of the village. My own movements were restricted, and I was not allowed to go out beyond the range of their observation. The ordinary life of the people was not seriously interfered with, and, considering all things, our custodians behaved with good-natured toleration. The shops were open as usual, though naturally there was next to no business doing.

The chief difficulty was our complete isolation from the rest of the country. We were, of course, cut off from any communication with our own headquarters at Pretoria. I managed to find a native who was willing to take a letter for me. I warned him that the duty was a hazardous one. It might cost him his life if he were caught with a letter from me in his possession. He said he would take the risk, and I arranged that, if he were successful, the authorities in Pretoria should pay him thirty shillings. It was easy for him to slip away, as the closer restrictions had not yet been imposed. I gave him a letter to Mr. Henrique Shepstone, who was the head of my department, with a short account of what had happened to us. This was cleverly sewn into a fold in his coat. It was not difficult for him to make his way across country, about a hundred miles. There were native kraals here and there where he could get food. The critical point was the arrival at his destination, for Pretoria was completely invested by the enemy. Sure enough he was caught as he was trying to pass through their lines, but the Boers, finding nothing about him of an incriminating nature, apparently suspected nothing, and being badly off for hands, set him to herd horses. After two or three days he took his opportunity and slipped away into the town and delivered my letter, which was very welcome, for the Pretorians were as isolated as we were. He received more than his promised payment, and he agreed to make a return journey to Zeerust. A dispatch was duly prepared and concealed in an ordinary staff, such as the natives are accustomed to carry. It was a full page of the

Government Gazette, with a résumé of all the principal items of news. Of this a photographic copy was taken, but so small that it could only be read with a magnifying glass. A hole was bored in the end of the stick, and the photograph rolled up and inserted in it, and the opening closed so neatly that it would escape the scrutiny of anyone not on the track.

On his arrival at Zeerust, Lang Klaas, as he was called, not aware of the new arrangement, entering the village in the dark, was pounced upon by the sentry. He quietly dropped his stick in the long grass by the roadside. He was marched off to the guard's quarters, and duly searched, happily for him without success; although he had another letter concealed in the lining of his hat, which had been given to him by a man in Pretoria who had friends in Zeerust. The discovery of this letter would have had very serious consequences, and it ought never to have been sent. The man made no sign, and his captors seem to have had no suspicions. He was ordered to take service with a Boer who lived just outside of the village, and he agreed to do so. He slept in the native location, and went back and forward to his work. In the course of a day or two he managed to recover his stick and to bring it to me, and with the aid of a microscope which I was able to borrow, I could read the whole story up to date.

A few days later the same man agreed to carry on the despatch to Mafeking, which was the headquarters of the Chief Montsiwa, beyond the Transvaal border. This chief, who was our staunch friend, was only too glad to send it on to Kimberley, where it was duly handed to the authorities. I have since been told that it was the first communication that reached the Government from Pretoria after its investment by the Boers, and it received due appreciation. A few days later we were surprised by a new move on the part of the Boers. A large party arrived one morning, and proceeded to make a house-to-house search for all the arms and ammunition on which they could lay their hands. The results were surprisingly small, for the inhabitants of Zeerust were not as a rule sportsmen, there being but little game in the vicinity, and there had been no preparation for warlike purposes.

A demand was addressed to me personally, that I should hand over for inspection my portfolio, containing all my

official correspondence with the Government. Fortunately there was in it no trace of my recent communications with Pretoria. I had kept copies of these, but they were lying under the blotting-paper on my writing table, and escaped their observation. In the portfolio were two official letters, which had been written and closed for dispatch by the post which had failed to go, when the postal communication had been cut off. These were supposed to be something important, and a meeting was called to go through my papers, more especially these two letters. They had to look round for an interpreter, and they employed an old Frenchman who lived in the village. He told me afterwards what took place. It so happened that these two letters dealt with a visit which I had paid, before there was any thought of hostilities, to one of the border tribes, to investigate the cause of the chronic irritation between them and their Boer neighbours. I had expressed a good deal of sympathy with the Boers, in what seemed to me a real grievance, and I had proposed to the natives an arrangement which it seemed to me would meet the difficulty, and they had agreed to it. It so happened that the arrangement was one which would have been highly acceptable to the Boers too. The outcome of the whole matter was that there was a revulsion of feeling in my favour. My portfolio was returned with a civil message.

Still, the precautions of the Boers were not relaxed, and during the whole of the time until the armistice was declared a sentry was stationed night and day at the corner of Mr. Spranger's house, where I was staying. I attempted no more official communication with Pretoria. It was a risky operation, and there was no practical purpose to be served making the risk worth while. The isolation was trying to all of us. My wife and family were in Graham's Town. She was indefatigable in her efforts to send me letters, writing every week and trying all sorts of routes. Four of her letters reached me in the three months, out of fourteen which she posted. These four I owed to the good offices of the natives, and of the Rev. T. Jensen, a German missionary about fifteen miles out westward.

One little episode is worth mentioning. Shortly after the commencement of the war, the Boers wanted corn ground. My host, Mr. Spranger, had a steam mill, which

was duly requisitioned. He pointed out to the Boers that he could not accede to their demand that he should grind corn for them unless he could get a load of firewood brought in as usual by the natives. To this they agreed, and accordingly a native wagon came in a few days later with the necessary supply, and this was duly loaded off at the back of the house. I went to look on from a prudent distance, as the Boer sentry was also there, and evidently on the alert. The natives while unloading the wood seemed entirely to ignore our presence, and kept up between themselves an animated conversation about various nothings. I noticed that there was one particular log of wood which they contrived to let fall a little apart from the rest. Continuing their irrelevant chatter, and with no change of tone, one remarked to the other, 'There is a hole in that log of wood. Perhaps, if one were to look, one might find a bird's-nest in it.' In due time they finished their work and drove off, not a word or a look having passed between us. The sentry also moved away to his usual station, and I took the opportunity to go over to the log in question. Sure enough there was the hole, stopped up with a bunch of grass. I took out the grass and there was a letter from my wife. It had been addressed to the care of a friend in Kimberley, a Mr. Alphonse Levy, who knew the natives well. He had put it into the hands of some native, and it had found its way to a chief, the nearest over the border to Zeerust.

The other three letters I received from the same source and through similar channels were brought to me by Mr. Jensen, the missionary, on different occasions when he visited the village. He usually brought in with him a basket of garden produce in which my letters were concealed. These communications from my own home went far to relieve the tedium of that somewhat weary three months. I may mention here that after the war the whole of my wife's letters reached me. They had been addressed at a venture, some to Bloemfontein and some to Natal; and it says much for the goodwill of the postal officials concerned that they should have carefully passed on as soon as the way was cleared by the cessation of hostilities.

Another little serio-comic incident occurred to break the dull routine of the three months and our isolation from the outer world. The only place of worship in the

village where the services were in English was the Anglican church. At that time there happened not to be any clergyman available to officiate, and the usual services were being conducted by one of the storekeepers. He was a good and worthy man, well fitted for his work and the object of general esteem. On the first Sunday after the investment, in reading the morning prayers, he omitted those for the Queen and the Royal Family. This was not lost upon the congregation, and considerable excitement was roused. After the service was over a meeting was held outside of the church, and he was called to give a reason for his action. He pleaded that he could not afford to encounter the offence it would give to the Boers, and that he would have to persist in his refusal to read those particular prayers, and he must resign his duty of conducting the services. I was not present at the meeting, but I was approached with the request that I would undertake the duty, and give due place to our loyal instincts. I agreed to do so, and for the rest of the time discharged the duty. The incident got abroad, and the Boers took it very good-humouredly. Indeed, upon the whole, in other matters as in this, there was nothing unfriendly in their attitude; indeed there were not wanting some of them who in private expressed their goodwill and sympathy with us.

At length, on the 4th of April, the news reached us that an armistice had been agreed to, and our monotonous period of inaction came to an end. It was not the kind of end that the British could have wished for, but it was some kind of a relief, however poor. The Boers in the neighbourhood flocked into the village, and there was a general friendliness, but it was not unnoticed by us that there was a considerable divergence of feeling among the Boers themselves. Two of the local field-cornets came to me privately and expressed their regret at the turn things had taken. Neither of them had personally served in the military operations, in fact one of them had withdrawn across the border followed by a number of Boer families, in order to keep apart from the whole business; and by doing so they had incurred a certain amount of illwill from their neighbours. These men deplored to me the fact that the Government in Pretoria had not at the outset taken a different line by appealing to the active loyalty

of those who would have responded, a call which at the right moment might have deterred the rest from acts of war. All this is now ancient history ; so much water has passed under the bridge since then, but it is well that these things should be remembered.

On the 7th of April I left by a casual opportunity and reached Pretoria on the 14th, travelling sometimes by horse conveyance and sometimes by ox-wagon—as opportunity offered—as the ordinary lines for passenger traffic had ceased to exist in consequence of the war. From Rustenburg to Pretoria I was indebted for a lift to a Mr. John Wagner of the former place, who with a fellow-townsmen whose name I forget—a Hollander—had hired a native wagon for the journey. No one seemed to know exactly what had happened—or what the peace meant. The Boers were silent—for there were among them some who were still decidedly loyal to the British Government ; but no man cared to commit himself, not knowing what this might involve in the future. At two or three places I rested at the houses of German missionaries. They naturally fell upon me with eager inquiries, as I was a Government official, but I could give them no information, having been shut up in Zeerust for more than three months, under close surveillance of the Boers, and having no communication with headquarters.

These worthy men had the haunting suspicion which was almost worse than certainty that the Boers were to have their way. For three years the missionaries and their people had enjoyed the sweets of being under British rule, and the prospect of a return to the old regime was almost more than they could bear to think of. But a cloud of black foreboding hung over us all—and I shall never forget the mournful hours we spent together far into the night speaking with bated breath—for they too could not afford to make any sign before their Boer neighbours, in whose power they might shortly be.

We reached Pretoria in the darkness, and next morning I reported myself at the Native Affairs Office. It was then that the full and dread significance of the situation became certain. The Royal Commission was sitting, and a copy of the circular inviting Government servants to offer their services to the provisional triumvirate was put into my hands. The triumvirate consisted of Paul Kruger, Piet

Joubert, and a Pretorius, and was to take over the charge of affairs, and had expressed a hope that some, if not all, of the existing staff in the Civil Establishment would be willing to continue in office.

I regarded this circular as a gratuitous insult, and in this spirit I sent a suitably worded reply to the Royal Commission—which consisted of Sir Hercules Robinson, Sir Evelyn Wood, and Sir Henry de Villiers. I also wrote, at the request of Mr. Henrique Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs, a paper embodying my views on the situation as affecting the natives. This paper was by him forwarded to the Royal Commission, but not without a protest from General Bellairs, Acting Administrator, who warned me that a document couched in such terms and addressed to so august a body as the Royal Commission must be sent at my own risk. I was quite willing in the bitterness of my soul to encounter that risk or any other.

To me personally it was not a matter worth a brass farthing—the world was all before me where to choose: it was the fate of those hundreds of thousands of natives, who, it seemed to me, were going to be cruelly wronged and deserted by us. I never received any reply to my remonstrance, but I heard indirectly that in the hearts of two members of the Royal Commission my words called out a sympathetic echo: but they were not their own masters—they could not follow their own sense of right, they were acting under imperative orders from Downing Street.

About three weeks later I was ordered to proceed to the western border, for which I had been Commissioner under the British Government, and to summon all the chiefs within and without the border to present themselves at Pretoria on the 2nd of August for the purpose of hearing a Government proclamation. A similar summons was sent to the north and north-east parts of the Transvaal. In due time I returned to Pretoria, accompanied by the chiefs and headmen of nearly every tribe. At certain places along the road the Boers, who did not like the look of the imposing cavalcade of fifty wagons and other vehicles, said to some of the chiefs, 'Wait a bit! till the English Government has fled out of our country, and we will teach you your place—to serve us, and not to ride about in wagons and carts like gentlemen.'

We pitched our camp at the entrance of the town of Pretoria. I was the only Native Commissioner to remain with them—and I advised the chiefs to make a rule that all their people must be back at the wagons at sunset, and that they must be on their good behaviour. There was not a single case of disorder.

On the 2nd of August the natives assembled in front of the Public Offices. A few of the principal chiefs were seated on chairs which they had brought with them; the remainder of the headmen, to the number of at least one thousand, ranged themselves in a great semicircle behind them. A platform had been put up for the accommodation of the Royal Commission, and upon this all eyes were fixed, and a profound silence reigned. At eleven o'clock a guard of honour with fixed bayonets and a band playing drew up alongside of the platform—and the members of the Commission accompanied by the Boer Triumvirate took their seats.

Sir Hercules Robinson rose and read the Proclamation. It professed to explain that Her Majesty the Queen had seen fit to give back the country to the Boer Government now formed, but that the interests of the natives would be safeguarded. A high official, Mr. George Hudson, who was on the platform, and was pointed out to the natives, would remain in the country as British Representative, and to him the natives would have the right of appeal.

After the Proclamation had been read in English, it was read again in the Sechwana language, which was understood by the greater part of the natives present, and as soon as this had been done the Royal Commission at once rose and departed, accompanied by all who were on the platform.

The astonished audience sat as if they had been struck into stone. Not a sound was heard. It seemed as if they would never move or speak again. I went into the Native Affairs Office, just opposite, and appealed to Mr. Henrique Shepstone's life-long knowledge of the native character. He knew as well as I that they ought to have had the opportunity given to say something. 'I cannot face them,' he said; 'but you go to Government House and appeal to the Royal Commission.' I went and told them that the natives would not move till they had had an

opportunity of speaking. Sir Evelyn Wood seemed disposed to yield, but Sir Hercules Robinson was firm. 'It will answer no practical purpose,' he said, 'and it will be a most painful business.' I was sent back to tell Mr. Shepstone to do what he could, and to get them away quietly. We went out together, and explained that the Government had commissioned us to receive their words.

A few spoke, but for the most part there was the silence of despair. One gentle old man—Mokhatle—a man of great influence and a thorough Christian, used the language of resignation: 'When I was a child the Matabele came, they swept over us like the wind, and we bowed before them like the long white grass on the plains. They left us, and we stood upright again. The Boers came, and we bowed ourselves under them in like manner. The British came, and we rose upright, our hearts lived within us and we said, "Now we are the children of the Great Lady." And now that is past and we must lie flat again under the wind—who knows what are the ways of God?' Mokhatle is long dead, but thanks to his wise acceptance of the inevitable, his people and those who followed his advice have fared as well as it was possible for them to do, but no thanks to our protection! The others who spoke on that occasion took a different tone. All protested—some in plaintive tones, others in the language of fierce defiance. The bones of most of these latter are now bleaching round the mountain fastnesses to which they trusted in vain. One and all they wanted to know why we treated them as if they were mere cattle, handing them over to another master against their own will—but that protest, like many others, was an inconvenient one to listen to, and to-day we are reaping what we have sown. How long this would have gone on I know not, but Colonel Gildea, with kindly tact, came to our rescue. He asked me to tell the principal chiefs that he and his officers wished them to come to the camp and receive a little refreshment and courtesy: and so the assembly broke up—and with it passed all the hopes of the native tribes in the Transvaal. I went with the chiefs to the camp. The Colonel and all the officers showed a kind and sympathising spirit which will never be forgotten—the one bright gleam of sunshine on that dark day.

Sir Hercules Robinson, afterwards Lord Rosmead, has passed away, and I shall do him no harm by saying that on the evening of that day he said to me privately, 'I have never been so ashamed of a day's work in my life, but I am acting under imperative orders, and against my own judgment.' Just so! The British Government had determined, rightly or wrongly, to get out of the Transvaal, and our responsibility to half a million of natives was thrown to the winds.

As to the promised safeguarding of native rights and interests, that was all part of the huge fraud. Within a twelvemonth many of the chiefs who had committed themselves as our friends were paid out for it, and we have lost a confidence which it will take us long to regain.

The assembly dispersed, and the natives struck camp and departed to their own homes. As the Government had no further occasion for my services, I was free to go whither I would. I was offered a free pass to Durban, but I preferred to return to the western border, and to pay a farewell to my native friends. They had taken the change in affairs very quietly, but they were quite unable to understand the attitude of the British Government. I took the opportunity of my short and final stay among them to explain to them that our withdrawal from the Transvaal was in a large measure the outcome of party politics in England; and where I had the opportunity of going fully into matters with the principal native chiefs, I strongly urged upon them the duty of making the best of the situation, and to avoid anything that might be taken as unfriendly to their Boer neighbours; and of keeping the peace among themselves, so as to afford no pretext for intervention; but it was with a sorrowful heart that I took my leave of them, and of any prospect of being able to stand as their friend and adviser.

On this journey, halting as we had to do at the farms along the route, I had many opportunities of conversation with their owners. I found a very considerable number of Boers who expressed themselves strongly as regretting the turn things had taken, and the departure of the British officials from the country. I could not but feel that a mistake had been made in the retrocession of the Transvaal. Many of these people had stood aloof, and had taken no

part in the war, so far as they could possibly help it. Of course, they had to suffer for this afterwards, and some of them were our most determined opponents in the later war. They took good care not to make a similar mistake again."

CHAPTER XVI

THE TRANSVAAL (*continued*)

VIEWED from the vantage ground of forty years after, the retrocession of the Transvaal looms through the prospective of history as a comparatively insignificant episode in the annals of British Colonial policy, but its results, of which the full harvest of evil is yet to be reaped, were far-reaching and disastrous. Among the unlooked-for consequences of the misguided action of the British Government was the recrudescence of racial feeling throughout the whole sub-continent, arising not from the war itself, but from the manner in which it terminated.

Up to this time the old antagonism between English and Dutch had been rapidly disappearing, especially in the Colony and the Orange Free State, but the reputed magnanimity of England entirely failed of its object and earned only contempt. Out of this sprang the dream of a Dutch South Africa, and for many years thereafter, by insidious propaganda, sedition and anti-English sentiments were preached far and wide, with dire results to all concerned. Thus it came about that in the war of 1899 the Orange Free State, which previously had been neutral, threw in its lot with the Transvaal, and many of the Cape Colony Dutch secretly, if not openly, sympathised with its cause.

The account given by Moffat of his experiences during this period was compiled from memory in the later years of his life, but from a historical point of view some extracts from his letters written at the time have some value as showing more vividly what it meant to those directly or indirectly concerned.

Those who talk glibly of Mr. Gladstone's honourable intentions forget that it is easy to be virtuous at other people's expense, and that the toad under a harrow may

well be excused if he fails to see the necessity for crushing him in order to benefit another.

To his Father-in-law

ZEERUST,
January 11, 1881.

“The Boers have the upper hand of it at present, and have cut off our communications, so one can only smuggle letters out.

The district landdrost, or magistrate, has acted a somewhat unmanly part, so that I have to bear the brunt of the hostility which is directed against any Government official, and I am especially odious on account of my position as protector of the natives. I think the Government would have had a more loyal following if they had acted with more decision and severity. Many of the Boers have joined the rebels because the prospect of Government interference and protection was so faint. The native tribes on this side of the country have remained firm beyond utmost hopes. They have refrained from any aggressive movement, but at the same time have declined to accept any of the Boer proposals, and it is partly, I think, owing to our vicinity to them that we have been so little molested. The men with whom this struggle is being waged have been the hereditary malcontents of South Africa since English rule was first established. Their fathers emigrated from the Cape Colony because the Government interfered with slavery and with their unbridled licence which they called freedom.

A Boer's idea of freedom is to monopolise a huge piece of territory, to treat as vassals or serfs all the natives upon it, to pay no taxes, and to resist the progress of civilisation.

But the majority of them here are not mad enough to wish for a native rising while they are fighting the Government, and they have come to understand that to interfere with the Europeans of Zeerust would in all probability involve them with the natives.”

To his Father

February 17, 1881.

“We are still enduring the tedium of a sort of siege, happily of a comparatively mild character. We are wondering when the Government will be in a position to

resume its authority in this district. I have felt it my duty to remain here, though it would have been possible for me to have run the gauntlet and to have got out among the Bechwana. I have had not a line from Government since the thing commenced. The natives are behaving well, but their faith is being sorely tried by the length of time which has elapsed, and they have no evidence that the Government is making any headway. Meanwhile the Boers circulate the most astonishing stories about their victories. Many Boers have gone over to the rebel side because of the deep-rooted impression that England will after all give back the Transvaal. Then there are many foreigners—Hollanders, Germans, and the like—who do not care a rap for either party, but on the whole would prefer the old state of things as affording them a better opportunity of pushing their own particular fortunes. The natives are to a man on the English side, and they form the most numerous portion of the population of the Transvaal, and they are at least as industrious and progressive as the Boers themselves, at all events when they get out from under the incubus of chiefdom, and they ought to be largely considered in the final settlement.”

February 23.

“ Apparently Lord Kimberley is still sending out pacific telegrams to the Boers. He does not know the character of the men with whom he has to deal. The Boers think that England is ‘played out,’ and they believe the agitators who tell them that she is on her last legs, and the delay in sending assistance to the Government in Pretoria, and these continual offers of peace, all point the same way in the Boer mind. The result is that many who were sufficiently contented under British rule have been led to believe that we never would keep the country, and now are beginning to think we could not if we would.”

To his Sister

March 3.

“ It is now nearly three months since I heard from E. [his wife]. I am constantly sending letters out, but it is another thing to receive them. But I must not grumble, for I might have been in jail all this time. I am kept under close espionage, and can scarcely speak to a native. This

morbid fear of the Blacks has been a great help in some ways to us English in Zeerust. But it puts me in a dangerous position and may cost me my life, for the least slip may bring about the catastrophe. I am often advised to make a bolt for it, but the path of duty is the path of safety. I do not pretend not to fear death, but there are worse things than death, but under these circumstances it is hard not to have had a line from E. or the children for so long. But I can trust them to good keeping. They have friends, and the best of all friends. My life has not been a financial success, and they are as likely to 'get on' in that respect without me as with me, if they will only remember me as an honest man who tried to do his duty and suffered for it. You will think this a dolorous epistle, and we may live to read and laugh at it together, but it is hard to walk in the valley of the shadow for weeks together without occasionally getting the blues, when one sees these fellows with loaded guns scowling at one, and telling me that I am the first one to be shot in Zeerust. My sin is that I represent the pro-native element in the Government, and so if I die it is for the Bechwana, and I am quite willing.

By the way, philanthropic Englishmen who do not like our fighting the Boers ought to remember that the grievance of grievances, which has caused this rebellion, is the determination of Colonel Lanyon and his Ministry that the black man shall have justice, which they never have had—and never will from the Boers."

To his Father

March 16, 1881.

"People here are losing heart. It is as much as I can do to hold my own against those who argue that the game is up and that we are to be left to the mercies of the Boers. The Hollander party Bok, Jorissen, and others like them are at the back of the whole rebellion. They have twisted Mr. Gladstone's language into a direction to suit their own purposes, and have thus induced a great many to join in the movement who would never otherwise have done so.

The native chiefs are most urgent to be allowed to come to our assistance, but I do not feel justified in saying the word. It would inaugurate a scene of horror and misery, and badly as some of the Boers have behaved, it would not be fair to the better sort to expose them wantonly to this."

To his Father

RUSTENBURG,

April 11, 1881.

“I am on my way to Pretoria. I have heard nothing from headquarters, and we get such an extraordinary account from the Boers of this patched-up peace. It seems incredible. Surely England is not going to desert the natives, who have maintained unwavering loyalty, and have thereby earned a more intense hatred than ever from the Boers. And what about the loyal English and Dutch who have suffered so much rather than renounce their allegiance? I cannot believe it.

The Boers loudly declare that they have thrashed the English, and have got their country back again.”

To his Father

PRETORIA,

April 24, 1881.

“In some respects the aspect of affairs is as warlike as ever, and there are many rumours. I am waiting on here in the hope of being called as a witness by the Royal Commission. I should not have expected it, but have been led to entertain the idea on account of the eagerness with which the authorities forwarded my report on the western border to Sir Evelyn Wood, and that the People’s Committee here has distinctly requested the Government to send me and the two other Native Commissioners to Newcastle. That request has not been complied with, and no reason is given.

If this proves a dream, I must return in a few days to Zeerust.

I do not know how to meet the natives. I am ashamed of the Government which has led them into such a false position, and seems intending to leave them in the lurch after all. The mere appointment of a British Resident at Pretoria will leave the natives on the western border quite unprotected.

Sir Owen Lanyon has gone. In him I miss a friend. He is a high-minded English gentleman who has been much and wrongly abused. If all his subordinates had been worthy of him, this fiasco need never have happened.

I am a steadfast Liberal, and a believer in Mr. Gladstone, and I can only suppose that the Home Government has been misled. I could have understood if, on his return to

power, Mr. Gladstone had given back this country to the dissatisfied section of its inhabitants; but after the assurances uttered in Parliament by him and Lord Kimberley and by Mr. Foster respectively, that to do so was 'impossible,' that it would be 'unjust to the loyal inhabitants and to the tens of thousands of natives,' to do so after attempting military force is simply beyond my understanding. The Boers are already breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the unfortunate natives. If I gave way to shame I could never face the latter again, but I must go back to the border and keep them as quiet as possible, until the Royal Commission has sat; a very little may cause an outbreak and a native rising as things are now.

I never was ashamed before to own myself a Briton, and I sympathise with those who have shaved off their whiskers and who sport a 'goatee beard' to make them look like Yankees. I have yet to go back and tell the Bechwanas that England has thrown them over. What are promises to a British statesman nowadays? As for the Boers, they look upon the magnanimity dodge as only a dodge; they are not so stupid as to be hoodwinked in that manner."

To his Father

LINOKANA, NEAR ZEERUST,

May 25, 1881.

"I am back here, and find things in a bad way. The natives are quarrelling amongst each other, and there has been fighting in which the chiefs have been egged on by the Boers. I was sent here to watch events, but feel very like a fool in my utter powerlessness—except so far as personal influence is concerned; and here are the Boers riding about and hectoring like conquerors so that the natives do not know what to believe. Whatever representation is given at home, the English in the Transvaal are a beaten people; even now the Boers are allowed to rampage about breaking the conditions of the so-called peace. What will it be when the garrisons all withdraw?

The Boers are even now saying, 'We must keep quiet just now; we must not alarm the British Government by difficulties with the natives; we must first get rid of the English out of the country, and then——'

I suppose I shall be paid off shortly and will have to

begin life anew. But I shall not regret having made an effort to help the Bechwana by coming here. The attempt may seem to have been thrown away, but I cannot believe that anything done in good faith and in God's Name can be entirely thrown away."

To his Father-in-law

LINOKANA,
May 21, 1881.

"I managed to slip through very quietly from Pretoria, and met with no worse usage on the road than some intolerable impudence such as every man who has the misfortune to be an Englishman must be content to accept as his proper portion in the Transvaal. Things here are in a nice mess. Unhappily I have only my personal influence to act upon. I now represent a mere shadowy Government which has been utterly discredited in the eyes of the natives by its broken promises to them.

Personal influence is all very well in times of peace, but it is too delicate an instrument to be of much use when men's minds are inflamed and blood has been spilt. I have not only this difficulty, but have to thwart the intrigues of the Boers, which were not of much account so long as the natives believed in the power and faithfulness of England, but now they believe in neither. This outbreak is one of the firstfruits of the crop of misery which England is sowing for hundreds of thousands of natives in and adjacent to the Transvaal. There has been a fight in which two hundred have been slain, and as usual the fire is spreading. Well! I must do my best; mortal man can do no more. There is not much for me to fear among the natives, and though I have risked my life in order to be faithful to my Queen and country, I have no great temptation to do so again; in fact my orders from headquarters now are, in case of any further outbreak, on no account to allow myself to fall into the hands of the Boers.

Though still attached to Liberal principles, and an admirer of Mr. Gladstone's nobility of purpose, I think his Ministry has made a terrible blunder, not in its consequences to his Government—for I am well aware that the Transvaal is only a little corner of the world—but terrible in its effects upon the inhabitants—Dutch, English, and native."

To his Father

ZEERUST,

June 15, 1881.

“We hear little of what is going on. The Royal Commission keeps everything to itself. Lord Cairns’ speech in the House of Lords has caused quite an excitement in this country, whatever it may have done at home. It costs me an effort as a Liberal to admit that a member of the late Conservative Government was the man thoroughly to understand the case in a way that astonishes South Africa.

If things go on as they have been doing lately there will be a good number added to those out here who think that the sooner England clears out the better, and leaves South Africa to manage her own affairs.

If she comes annexing territories, and then, after four years’ occupation, throws them away again like a broken toy, leaving them in misery and confusion indescribable, then she had better leave the country alone altogether. In English arithmetic, how many niggers go to a Boer? If the Government count heads, an overwhelming majority in the Transvaal is in favour of British rule. It is hard to look these in the face and to be unable to assure them that they shall have justice, except the justice that is to be secured by the appointment of a dummy British Resident.

I see that the Radical Press rails at those of us who have stuck to our Government and did our best, dubbing us ‘agitators and adventurers.’

I wish Sir Wilfrid Lawson could have a little practical experience of the Boers. Leaving the natives out of the question—for these Radicals are not nigger worshippers—they could see the sufferings of the loyal Boers who stick to their allegiance to the ‘Oude Noij’ (Old Mistress), as they call the Queen, in a way which makes me ashamed of my fellow-countrymen.”

To his Father

MAEJALIESBURG,

August 10, 1881.

“The final act has closed, and I am on my way back to the western border to wind up my affairs. My people left before me, and by now some are already telling their

astonished friends that it is indeed a fact that England has eaten her words. It is vain to tell them, for they know better, that England has provided for their protection. We have broken solemn faith and have thrown away the trust which the natives put in us, and this is conduct which must bring retribution. I have been paid off, and I am, of course, leaving the country. If any disturbances arise on the border, which is more than likely, there are plenty of Boers who would lay it to my charge; on the other hand, it would be a painful thing for me to have to sit and look on helplessly while injustice and cruelty were being enacted, and I really do not know whether I could remain passive under such circumstances. I go southward, but do not relinquish the hope of serving the Bechwana still."

RUSTENBURG,

August 11.

"I have just arrived here, and the first news I get is that an atrocious murder of a native has been committed at Marico by one of the great ones of the Boers, a relation of Paul Kruger!"

To his Father-in-law

August 12.

"It is no use attempting the rôle of a prophet, but there is little prospect of a permanent settlement. The financial difficulty is a serious one.

The Boers do not believe in paying taxes. The great sin of the late Government was that it collected taxes firmly. Then the native question will soon be a burning one, for it is as impossible for a Boer to treat a nigger justly as it would be for the latter to comb out his hair straight. The natives have learned under our rule what justice is, and will not easily return to the old regime. I shall be surprised if things go on well."

The anticipations of Moffat and other far-seeing men were, as it turned out, not realized in one respect, for the discovery of gold gave the Transvaal a new lease of life. Had it not been for this development, there is little doubt the Boer state would soon have reverted to the state of bankruptcy from which it was saved by the first British

annexation. The gold of the Rand saved it, and in a few years it had money enough and to spare, with the result that there was inaugurated the most grotesque government that ever masqueraded under the cloak of Christianity. But like an inverted pyramid, nothing could avert its final doom, and in 1902 it passed away with the Treaty of Vereeniging. As touching the natives living in the Transvaal, Moffat's forebodings were more than justified, but luckily for those beyond the border, England at length awoke to her responsibilities, and in 1885 the proclamation of a Protectorate over the native territories on the north-western border put an end for ever in that direction to any possible aggression on the part of the Boers. But the history of the black inhabitants of the Transvaal itself, could it be written in detail, would afford melancholy reading, and to this day, throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire, there are no people who possess less political or personal liberty than do the unfortunate niggers of the Transvaal.

The heritage of a forgotten but dark past still clings to a land that was originally occupied on lines which, judged by modern views, can only be regarded as sheer filibustering. The emigrant Boer farmers—"Voortrekkers," as they called themselves—posed as God's chosen people fleeing from their Egypt, the Colony. The Transvaal they looked upon as their promised land, whose inhabitants were but as the Canaanites whom it was their duty to dispossess, exterminate, or enslave—a grievous example of the mischief that may accrue from a too literal interpretation of the Bible by ignorant minds.

The spirit of these old pioneers still lives among their descendants even in these more enlightened days, as is exemplified by their attitude towards the native. Evil communications corrupt good manners, and it must be confessed that it is a spirit which permeates the whole social atmosphere, infecting English as well as Dutch. There is no more virulent nigger-hater to be found than among some of the English in the Transvaal—and their feelings are invariably in inverse proportion to their knowledge of the men whom they despise. Probably some of the worst offenders in this respect are those who may never have spoken two words to a native, except maybe to curse him, for as a general rule the Colonial or the Englishman who has been

thrown into contact with the blacks develops a kindly feeling towards them.

In closing this chapter of Moffat's career, it is only right to point out that, though to the end of his life he held to the belief that under British rule the natives had a much greater chance of justice and fair play than under any Government, in later years he was constrained to judge the Boers less harshly. Not that he condoned for one moment their methods or their general attitude towards the natives, but he realised that, unfortunately, our own escutcheon is not so stainless that we are entitled to cast mud at our neighbours. There are pages in our recent Colonial history that brought the blush of shame to his cheeks, and as touching the dark deeds perpetrated by the Boers half a century and more ago, he felt that in strict fairness these should hardly be judged by modern standards. Not only so, but he recognised that the Dutch, taken as a whole, have like other people advanced, though perhaps more slowly, and it was a source of unbounded satisfaction to him when a missionary spirit began to manifest itself among the ministers and congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Colony.

While he necessarily remained antagonistic to the reactionary and conservative ideas of the less progressive party, he welcomed every sign of a *rapprochement* between the less extreme members of the two races. So far as the natives were concerned, in these latter days he feared not so much the Dutch element in itself, but rather that widely prevalent spirit which prompts men to look upon the black man as a hewer of wood and a drawer of water; who at all costs must be kept in his place, and against whom the gates of progress should be shut. Those who through laziness, and who in their desire to amass wealth quickly, regard the nigger merely as a means to suit their ends, found in Moffat an uncompromising opponent, whatever their nationality might be.

CHAPTER XVII

BASUTOLAND, 1882-1884

AT the end of September 1881 Moffat, travelling southward to join his family in Graham's Town, reached Kimberley. Only a twelvemonth before his face had been set hopefully in the opposite direction, but now once more adrift, and, in one way, with damaged prospects, he was retracing his steps. His experiences in Government service had not been encouraging, and more than ever his thoughts turned to mission work of some kind, after which he still hankered.

But by taking a secular post under the Government he had further lost caste among some of his fellow-Christians, a fact which was soon to be brought unpleasantly home to him. As a set-off against this disadvantage he had, while in Pretoria, come into official contact with the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, who evidently had formed a favourable opinion of him, for thereafter he never lacked kindness and support in that quarter.

Before they parted at Pretoria the Governor, while not pledging himself, had hinted at the possibility of further employment, but as usual Moffat was content to leave his course in the shaping hand of Providence.

Immediately on arriving at Kimberley he found temporary work to hand, which at the same time enabled him to confer a benefit on an old friend, the Rev. Mr. Philip, who was anxious to get away for a much-needed holiday. Moffat gladly consented to act for him during his absence, and for two months he remained in Kimberley ministering to the European Congregational church.

The following extracts from letters written at this time give some sidelights on the diamond fields forty years ago :

KIMBERLEY,
October 14, 1881.

“ You will have heard of my sojourn here. I am glad to do Fred Philip and his people a service, and the change

is beneficial to myself. It is better than having nothing to do, and the stirring activity of the place is quite invigorating after the depressing influences of the past few months. Nothing definite is yet before me, though various things are looming in the distance as to possibilities.

I do not wish to choose, and would rather that choice were not offered, but that Providence would choose for me. The church in Graham's Town is not attractive, and at present it is not offered to me, but if it should prove to be the path of duty, I will console myself with the prospect of reunion with wife and family and the quiet home life which I have learned to value more than ever.

This is a marvellous place, and the community one of the strangest and most mixed in the world. Mammon is, of course, the great god; even within the precincts of the church his influence is felt. I hope, however, that even there there is good work going on.

Jews are here in tribes. The prominent feature in every secular gathering is that wonderful nose. The population is twenty-two thousand, and all this within the space upon which twelve years ago two beggarly Dutchmen lived from hand to mouth with a few hundred sheep. There is nothing Colonial about the air of the place. It is cosmopolitan. The Press is amazingly poor, but men did not come here to cultivate the intellect.

I was thinking hardly of British courage and enterprise after seeing the exhibition we have had to see in the Transvaal, but my heart is refreshed by finding that the old stuff is there still, though the nation may have been misled by a few Radicals.

I meet a good many of my old Transvaal acquaintances like shipwrecked mariners, and we have a strong fellow-feeling."

At the end of November Moffat left Kimberley and proceeded to Cape Town in order to interview the authorities, but his application for employment was not immediately successful.

CAPE TOWN,
December 23, 1881.

"My stay here, as at Kimberley, has been prolonged much beyond expectation. In one respect it is a matter

for patience. I am, of course, waiting upon the pleasure of the great folks. The Governor is my friend, but cannot command, and there is a disposition to resist Government House influence as a kind of reaction against the excessive sway of Sir Bartle Frere's time. I have not set my heart upon Government service. It would involve further separation from my family, and in some respects it is a thankless affair for a conscientious man, but I should like to do what I can for the natives."

CAPE TOWN,
January 3, 1882.

"My application to the Government has been unsuccessful, and I must now see what else there is to be done. It is a disappointment, for I had been led to believe that my services had only to be offered to be accepted. However, it is no use bothering about that now, and I have done what I could.

From the Transvaal there is but little news. The country is cut off from the outer world. It seems as though the object of the rulers was to shroud themselves and their doings from the observation of the rest of mankind, and I am not surprised.

Of course the natives are going to the wall, and as the British Resident is paid to hold his tongue, nobody is any the wiser."

Three days after writing the above Moffat arrived in Graham's Town, after an absence of nearly eighteen months, and once again practically penniless he had to face a world which seemed to have no need of him. It was a trying experience only lightened by the joy of reunion with wife and children after days of storm and stress, some of which had brought him perilously near the end of all things.

Fortunately just at this time his eldest son spent a few days in Graham's Town, and the whole family, as it turned out for the last time, met under one roof. For Moffat himself the four ensuing months marked the close of his family life, little though he then realised it.

Thereafter, except for brief visits at long intervals, the home circle knew him no more, and by the time he retired in 1896 the birds had flown from the parental nest. To one so fond and proud of his children as he, this represented

no mean sacrifice at the call of duty. The Government having apparently no further use for him, he offered his services to the Scotch Mission in Kaffraria, but his application had to be referred to the Committee in Scotland. Before the answer had come the Government had made up its mind and offered him the post of Acting Resident Magistrate at Maseru, the headquarter station in Basutoland. This he decided to accept, comforting himself with the reflection that, should the Committee's reply be favourable, it would be easy for him to resign his Government appointment in the event of its not proving satisfactory. As subsequent events proved he did wisely, for the Mission Society returned a curt refusal, a fact which Moffat accepted as an indication that he had taken the right course in accepting the Basutoland appointment.

To his Father

GRAHAM'S TOWN,
April 28, 1882.

"I am appointed Resident Magistrate at Maseru in Basutoland. Of course the prospect is a mingled one. The position of a Government official in Basutoland is embarrassing, if not painful, in the present state of things—it may become dangerous. Duty is, however, plain enough in this case. When the Government appoints a man of my antecedents and known leanings to such a position, it is an earnest of a sincere wish to do justice to the natives, and it would be wrong to refuse the opportunity thus offered in the Providence of God. Dr. Stewart strongly advised my acceptance of the position, and I have asked him to excuse me to the Free Church for not waiting for their reply. The salary, when I have got rid of the embarrassments which have necessarily closed me round, will be enough to live upon, though virtually it will not come to more than I am leaving the prospect of here, so that there is no mercenary motive at work.

Of course the wife and family cannot go up at present, and there are plenty of stormy-looking clouds on the horizon, but my trust is in a foundation which cannot be shaken.

I could have wished that my commission should have been to our unfortunate Bechwana, but there seems no

hope of doing anything for them as long as that canting Radical Party is in power in England.”

On May 9, 1882, Moffat left Graham's Town for his new sphere of labour in Basutoland, and for the enlightenment of some, it is perhaps necessary to recall the political state of affairs at that time so far as they concern that comparatively little-known country.

In 1880 the Colonial Government, under the leadership of the late Sir Gordon Sprigg, had quite gratuitously and unjustifiably embroiled itself with the Basutos, and the refusal of the latter to submit to a disarmament Act, which had been light-heartedly passed, precipitated hostilities. The Basutos are a hardy mountain race, who among their rocky fastnesses have always maintained their liberty and quasi-independence. In trying to coerce them by what the Basutos regarded as an unjust and uncalled-for measure, the Colonial Government found to its cost that it had stirred up a veritable hornet's nest.

The physical configuration of the country made campaigning difficult, especially as the Basutos, taken as a whole, are a nation of horsemen, and their wiry ponies are renowned throughout South Africa for their wonderful staying powers. Not for the first time these brave and resourceful mountaineers proved themselves no mean antagonists in the game of war. Possibly many of the Colonial burghers fought but half-heartedly, for the incentive of loot in the shape of land was lacking; but whatever the cause, the campaign went badly. There were more than one of those occurrences, which in later years became familiar to the British public as “regrettable incidents,” and the Colony in general soon became heartily sick and ashamed of the whole business.

After a desultory and inglorious course the war terminated in a sort of truce, the Basutos having virtually had the best of it.

From this time onward chaos and lawlessness had reigned in a distracted country nominally at peace. The Basutos themselves were truculent and openly flouted the Government. The Queen's writ, as it was then, ran but a few miles from the district magistracies, where the officials, supported by a handful of Cape Mounted Rifles or native police, made a pretence of maintaining order. The natives were squab-

bling among themselves, the petty chiefs acting in defiance of the Paramount. Not only so, but a certain section under a sub-chief named Jonathan had, when war broke out, remained loyal, possibly prompted by the feeling that they were backing the stronger side.

Their rebel compatriots naturally looked upon them as traitors to the common cause, and in the prevailing anarchy they found abundant opportunity for revenge. These loyalists had lost heavily in stock, and the Government had not sufficient strength to protect them efficiently, though it endeavoured as far as possible to provide them with food.

Such was the state of Basutoland when Moffat arrived at Maseru on May 16, 1882, and it is little wonder that he found the prospect far from inviting, a feeling that would have been intensified had he known all that lay before him.

His previous Government post in the Transvaal had been for the most part political, in that he had merely acted as an intermediary and adviser between the natives on the one hand, and the Boers and the Government on the other, but he had exercised no judicial functions. He now found himself elected to a magistrate's bench with no previous experience to guide him. In a place like Maseru the administration of the law resolved itself, for the most part, into an application of the ordinary principles of common-sense justice, but the procedure, of course, had to follow established custom, and of this Moffat knew nothing. It is doubtful whether he had ever before entered a court of justice of any kind unless out of curiosity. Fortunately his predecessor in the office had elected, for reasons of his own, to remain at Maseru for a couple of months, and his presence and willing help saved the situation.

But perhaps the greatest difficulty against which Moffat had to contend arose from the lack of sympathy between him and his immediate superiors, a trio of men whose ideals and outlook upon life in general, and the native question in particular, were diametrically opposed to his own. The tension thus produced led to open antagonism, and matters very soon came to a crisis. His opponents did their best to damage him and to secure his dismissal, but without success. The Governor at the Cape must have had firm faith in Moffat, for the storm subsided, and in the end it was his enemies who retired discomfited and discredited from Basutoland.

During the latter half of his service there Moffat had the pleasure of working under a man after his own heart, the late Captain Matthew Blyth, C.M.G., whose untimely death he never ceased to deplore.

In one respect Basutoland aroused familiar associations in Moffat's mind. Its people are closely akin to the Bechwana, and the languages of the two differ only dialectically. He thus found himself among natives whom he very soon learned to understand, an indispensable condition if a man wishes to gain their confidence.

Looked at from the point of view of work accomplished, his service in Basutoland was disappointing and barren in the extreme. The Government during this period was simply marking time, and its officials could do little else but keep in step. Except for such personal influence as he may have exercised on individuals, he could do little for the Basutos or their country.

But in other ways it was not time lost, for the experience gained stood him in good stead in the future. It familiarised him with official life and administrative routine, and gave him an insight into matters concerning which he before knew little or nothing.

Not only so, but the encomiums passed upon him at the end by his superior officer, Captain Blyth, must have afforded evidence to the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, that his own previous estimate of the man had not been mistaken, and they thus rendered his re-employment a matter of certainty.

CHAPTER XVIII

BASUTOLAND (*continued*)

MOFFAT'S life and experiences at Maseru can best be described from his own letters written at this time. The majority of those from which the following extracts are taken were addressed to his father, Dr. Robert Moffat, and his father-in-law, Mr. J. S. Unwin.

MASERU,
June 16, 1882.

“ I have been here a month to-day and am just beginning to see daylight. It was a little perplexing at first to be pitchforked into the position and duties of a magistrate. My clerk was nearly as raw as myself, and is postmaster besides, which militates against his serviceableness to me. The duties in the Transvaal were very different from those here. Still, I do not despair of succeeding if I only have fair play, of which there is not much hope judging from the manner in which other officials have been dealt with. It has been a great help that the ex-magistrate my predecessor has been here for me to appeal to about all cases of precedent. According to the opinion of the most experienced men in the country there are only two alternatives before the Government here—either to reconquer the Basutos, which the Colony is not prepared to do, unless the Imperial Government will allow the Colonists to do it in their own way, which means that the land and cattle of the Basutos be given up as spoil to all who will fight; or that we relinquish the pretence of governing the country. It would be premature for me to give an opinion on the subject. The Government is trying a middle course, but has not the courage to admit the whole truth to the public, and is trying to make out that it is doing more than this. I think,

if they made a clean breast of it, it would be better, for it must come out eventually.

Meanwhile I am keeping quiet and testing my opinions. My duties at present are magisterial, and not political. I am enjoying opportunities of religious usefulness. A church clergyman comes over once a month, and I am taking up the work on the Sundays that he is not here. I hope I may be able to do some good, and it helps me to maintain a clear and recognised religious position among men who are for the most part heathens, of the earth earthy.

The clergyman is a High Church man, but I think his heart is larger than his ecclesiastical environments, and he has most cordially welcomed my co-operation. In a community like this we cannot afford to stickle upon ecclesiastical points."

July 10, 1882.

"The answer to my application to the Scotch Society amounted to a brusque rebuff. It took me completely by surprise. Apparently some members of the Mission had written strongly against me, men who have not forgiven me for having gone into the Transvaal service, and whose cast of mind is such that they could not give me credit for pure motives in a line of things outside their own experience. I have the witness of a good conscience, and this action has had at least one good result. I am enabled to rest upon the conviction that I am in the path of duty, and this is especially welcome when that path is a painful and difficult one. It is well for a man not to be able to foresee all the difficulties attendant on a certain course; and had I been able to foresee all that I know now, I should not have come to Basutoland. But now I am here I must make the best of it. . . . The action of the Government has been weak and wavering. Men like myself in less prominent positions are obliged silently to take our part in solemn shams such as are involved in holding a country over which we have no control. I do not resign because the routine work of my office involves no political unfaithfulness, and I am getting official experience and knowledge.

Things cannot last as they are, and if there should come a recasting of the Government, in such a way as still to give me a place in it, my present experience would be invaluable. The only thing that makes the position tolerable is the

conviction that God has brought me here and has made me willing to be and to suffer, whether it be to honour or dishonour."

August 7, 1882.

" Things here are gradually going from bad to worse. It may be that a time will come when those who are determined to be honest and true will have an opportunity of speaking out, and that the dishonesty in high places rife here will eventually be exposed. There is no sign of it at the present. In my own office I have twice come into collision with the chief magistrate upon points of honour and principle, so my position is difficult. I am walking by faith, and can only feel safe because I have tried to stick to what seemed to me to be the right thing; and even if I get kicked out, which is not at all unlikely, I shall go out, I hope, with a clear conscience."

September 4, 1882.

" The policy of sham is naturally bearing its legitimate fruits, and my relations with my superiors do not improve. I suppose that it will have to come sooner or later to a trial of strength between us, and naturally I must expect to go to the wall, unless it be the will of God that I conquer. It is said that General Gordon is coming up, and he seems to be a man with a conscience.

One is led to wonder what is to be the future of South Africa. There was a time when the Imperial Government could always be trusted to be just to the natives in spite of great blunders. That time seems to have gone by. Now that we are liable to periodical eruptions of Radicalism, England can no longer be regarded as a trustworthy friend of weaker races as she used to be. Colonel Griffith is here at present. He was the Governor's agent in Basutoland when the disarmament policy was introduced. He fought against it, but had to give way. He is a fine man. He thoroughly bears out the view of those who, like myself, look upon the present policy as a mistake. He resigned when the war was over, seeing that he could not govern on a footing that he could approve of, and is now on pension."

September 11, 1882.

" My position is as precarious as ever. If the chief magistrate remains, my departure is only a question of

time. I am certain that sooner or later he will break down with all his shams on top of him, but before then he may have got rid of me, as he already shows the most bitter feeling. I cannot help it, it has been no seeking of mine to quarrel with him, but I have crossed his path in more than one discreditable transaction, and I must pay the penalty."

October 1882.

"We have had a visit from the famous General Gordon, who was supposed to have such a talent for making and mending. Our difficulties seem to have been too much even for him, for he has suddenly departed, and rumour says he has not only left Basutoland, but that he has resigned his appointment of Commandant-General and has broken with the Cape Government.

The only feasible solution of the mystery is that he has given up the whole affair in disgust, and this would not be at all surprising if he is, as we believe, a man of sterling honesty and singleness of purpose.

I am having a dog's life of it here with the local powers that be, and have been reported upon by them to the Government for insubordination and obstruction, but as I have heard nothing more about it, I suppose it has fallen through.

Meanwhile the point on which I was at issue with my superior has been silently yielded, so I must conclude that I am left in possession of the field; but of course this has increased his animosity and his determination to get the better of me. Almost every political move he and his colleagues make is based on falsehood. It is hard to understand how they have been able to go on so long. My own desire would be to resign and fling defiance at them, but until I am called upon to choose between that and doing something actually wrong, I think it is right to wait for the Providence of God to remove me if such is His Will. But it is weary work."

November 6, 1882.

"Matters here are no way improved. It is surprising to find what foolish and incapable persons get to the head of affairs and keep there too.

It does not seem likely that the Basutos will ever settle down quietly under the Colonial Government again unless they are subdued, and the Home Government seems to have

washed its hands of South Africa, so there is no hope there. As for myself, the authorities here are doing their best to get rid of me. They have tried to frighten me and to insult me into resigning, but as long as I can keep my own hands clean nothing will induce me to do so. They are now trying other methods, and I am quite prepared for them to succeed. Letters are appearing in two Colonial papers which support the Government writing *at* certain officials in Basutoland charging them with trying to thwart the Government and suggesting that they should be dismissed.

The authorities have been extremely foolish and, what is worse, false.

Natives are very easy to govern if you will only be truthful, but if you try to deceive them you will find them your match there. The result is the Government have lost ground, and the Ministry is now feeling the public pulse with a view to war; but it is unlikely that they will meet with a favourable response, so abandonment is now looming in a not very distant future.

You will have heard that the Transvaal people's troubles are growing upon their hands. It is only what was to be expected, but it does little good to say to people, 'I told you so.' So the philanthropists at home find that they went a little too far in backing up Lord Kimberley's desertion of the natives. So the world wags on. The mischief is done now: South African natives must leave off looking to England; she does things too much by fits and starts. If she wishes to have anything to do with natives in South Africa, she must put her foot down and rule them apart from the Colonists and irrespective of their prejudices. It is much the same as it is at home. The majority of the people know little about the merits of the case, and take their opinions second-hand from a few newspaper correspondents or editors."

February 5, 1883.

"We are in a state of suspense until the doings of the Cape Parliament become known to us. It is proposed to repeal the Annexation Act of 1871 by which the Colony took over Basutoland from the Imperial Government. If the latter agree to this, Basutoland will revert under the direct government of the Crown.

In the impending changes I am trying to be prepared for a

repetition of my experience in Pretoria, that is to find that my services are no longer required. The present Secretary of Native Affairs is not likely to show me much consideration, for he has not found me a ready tool in his hands."

April 2, 1883.

"Great changes have taken place here. Captain Blyth has come and is now in charge; the only pity is that the change was not made long ago. It would have been of some use, but now it looks uncommonly like being too late. He may succeed in making some arrangement by which we can retain our footing in the country, but if we do that it will be about all.

I think my own prospects personally are a little better than they were; at all events, if we do not evacuate Basutoland altogether, I am one of those whom it is proposed to retain as a sub-resident; but should the country be abandoned, my chance of being retained in the service would be small."

May 7, 1883.

"We are living rather a tumultuous life here, and the Basutos are fighting each other. Things are approaching the end which must come. The old system of shams and patching is gone with its promoters, and of course has left its troubles behind it. Probably Captain Blyth will be blamed for some of the commotions, but the only way in which he can be blamed is that he has applied the test of truth to a system of falsehood, and there is the inevitable effervescence.

I see the Bechwana question is attracting some notice at home. Perhaps our Nonconformist philanthropists may be shamed into action by men who are not professed philanthropists, but retain a little old-fashioned English sense of justice.

The only consistent philanthropist in the front rank of the Liberal Party appears to be Mr. E. W. Forster. His words read like a refreshing tonic alongside of the diplomatic shilly-shally to which even Mr. Gladstone resorted, as I was sorry to see."

June 4, 1883.

"Probably Colonial rule will close here in another month, and it will then be abandonment or Imperial intervention. The latter—even if possible—is not earnestly desired by me,

for it appears that it is not well for the natives to depend for their welfare and preservation upon people so far away who make a mere stalking-horse of them for party purposes. Perhaps the Christian element in Colonial South Africa is likely to become a better safeguard to their rights than the spasmodic and uncertain intervention of people in England, with whom philanthropy has become a mere fashion, and has ceased to be a conviction."

July 2, 1883.

"No light yet on the political situation. Mr. Merriman is on his way back from England, and is bringing the proposals of the Imperial Government about Basutoland. I am not hopeful, for, judging by the policy of ministers elsewhere, if they can get out of any obligations to natives in South Africa, they will not fail to do so. As to what is to be done for the Bechwana we know nothing, but we hear a Commission is to come out to inquire into these matters. Meanwhile the grass may be growing, but the horse is starving. The Bechwanas are losing land and heart and everything else. It is a consolation in a measure to find that there is one Englishman left of the good old-fashioned type who thinks that promises are made to keep, and not, like pie-crust, to be broken.

I refer, of course, to E. W. Forster. It did me good to read his manly and honest speech at the meeting of the A.P. Society. It is one of the revenges of time that such a speech should have been well received in South Africa, and that the Aborigines Protection Society are admitted to be right for once. It may suit *The Times* and other organs to make out that a bold and honest course on the part of the Home Government would rouse the antagonism of the Colonists. On the contrary, every respectable Englishman, and for that matter Dutchman too, would be glad to see England stepping forward as of old to put down wrong and to remedy evils which the Colony finds, to its own cost, that it is unable to contend with.

Captain Blyth is in an unenviable position here. He is too honest to perpetrate or to condone any shams, and is out of sympathy with those in power who ought to back him up.

For myself I rejoice almost with trembling at some things which have lately come to light, showing how dangerous was my position last year under the old regime; how my steps

were watched and how traps were being laid for me. I can only understand my escapes as due to God's merciful will. I was ignorant of what was going on behind the scenes, and only tried to do what was right, and I have lived to see my enemies retire from Basutoland discredited and with utter failure written across their backs.

So brave old Colenso¹ is gone. Whatever may have been his errors and faults, the natives lose in him an unflinching and unwearied friend."

This was among the last letters, if not actually the last one, written by Moffat to his aged father, the Rev. Dr. Moffat, who in the following month passed to his rest. It may fitly conclude this series of extracts, for there is little more that need be added concerning his service in Basutoland.

A few months later, the Colonial Government having decided to withdraw, the Imperial authorities undertook to administer the country as a Crown Colony. The writer, who happened to be visiting his father at the time, had the pleasure of witnessing the hoisting of the Union Jack at the Residency in Maseru. The native police mounted as a guard of honour and perpetrated a somewhat stuttering *feu de joie*, but their hearts were glad and they did their best. As the old flag, the emblem of freedom and justice, fluttered up and threw out its folds into the breeze, it seemed to those of us who stood by to waft its proud message "Resurrexi," and led by Captain Blyth, we made the welkin ring with three hearty British cheers. And yet, in the background of the consciousness of some there lingered the remembrance of another scene, but two years gone, when that same flag had been struck in shame and humiliation. Moffat himself had become distrustful of his Motherland, and he feared that some gust of party spirit in England might lead to a reversal of policy and to the re-enactment of scenes the memory of which had seared his soul as with iron. Fortunately his forebodings were not realised. As it turned out, England pursued the course which he himself had indicated in one of his own letters as the only possible one. She had put her foot down, and she proceeded to rule the natives in her own way, and no more brilliant example of what that way can be is to be found in the annals of her Colonial policy.

¹ Bishop Colenso of Natal.—AUTHOR.

On the Basutos themselves the mere fact that they had escaped from the clutches of those whom they mistrusted, and that they had passed under the protection of "the Great Lady over the Water," had a tranquillising effect. Under a succession of wise and just administrators, such as Colonel Sir Marshall Clarke, Sir Godfrey Lagden, and Sir Herbert Sloley, Basutoland went on from prosperity to prosperity. If it be true that "happy is the land which has no history," it now well deserves the epithet. Except in annual reports recording facts and progress, Basutoland from this time drops out of public notice, so that for many people it has become but a name. And yet throughout the whole wide empire no more prosperous nor contented people are to be found than in this little corner, the Switzerland of South Africa.

But in the bringing about of this result Moffat himself was not fated to share. The Imperial Government, perhaps wisely, decided as much as possible to introduce new blood, and for the most part a clean sweep was made of the old order. In March 1884 Captain Blyth, whose health had broken down, retired, and Colonel Marshall Clarke—"One-armed Clarke," as he was called, the hero of a now almost forgotten episode, the defence of the fort at Potchefstrom in 1881—took over charge as representing the Imperial Government. Moffat and other officials remained on temporarily to assist in the process of handing over, but on May 5 he left Maseru after two years all but eleven days' residence there, and rejoined his family in Graham's Town.

In discharging its late employees in Basutoland, the Colonial Government contented itself with a vague promise that, as opportunity offered, their services might be again made use of, but at the time there did not appear to be any immediate prospect for Moffat himself.

At this juncture, however, another duty demanded his attention—viz. the writing of his father's life. Fortunately a small legacy left to him by the latter enabled him to provide for his family while thus occupied, and in June 1884 he left for England, where for the next nine months he was engaged in this filial task. The result of his labours appeared in due course in a volume under the title of *The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat*.

Though written in a style too soberly modest to satisfy

some critics, the book ran into more than one edition, and it still remains one of the classics of missionary literature. The ten years that had elapsed since Moffat's last visit to England had left their mark upon him, full as they had been of trial and anxiety. The change and intercourse with old friends had an invigorating effect upon him, and in June 1885 he returned to Graham's Town much benefited in mind and body.

His future was still dark and uncertain, but having received a half-promise of further employment from the Government, he was content to wait in patience for a few months, especially as his past experience with the Scotch Mission did not encourage him to offer his services to any other missionary body. For the third time in five years he had to live on faith, which was eventually rewarded by his appointment as Resident Magistrate at Taungs, in the recently-annexed territory of British Bechwanaland.

CHAPTER XIX

BECHWANALAND, 1885—1887

IN October 1885 Moffat arrived in Bechwanaland, and entered upon his duties as Resident Magistrate at the station known then and since in its Anglicised form by the name of Taung.¹

He was back once more in the land of his birth and among his own people, but great, and in some ways disastrous, changes had supervened since he had left it in 1881. The southern portion of Bechwanaland, roughly speaking from Mafeking to Kuruman, had been declared British territory; while over the northern part, up to and including Khama's country, a shadowy Protectorate had been proclaimed. The course of events that had led to these results may be briefly summarised:

Shortly after the retrocession of the Transvaal, the north-western border had relapsed into the usual condition of anarchy, which history has shown to be almost inseparable from Boer rule when contiguous to native states. During the short period of British sovereignty in the Transvaal much had been done to prevent intertribal disputes, and by equitable demarcation of boundaries to lay the foundation of lasting peace and prosperity for all concerned. The handing back of the Transvaal put an end to this dream, and before the ink with which the Convention had been signed was well dry, disaffection broke out and spread along the whole border.

¹ Most Europeans pronounce the name as though it were spelt Towns, or Tongs. According to strict Sechwana orthography it would be spelt and pronounced Tauñ = Ta-ung (nasal). Moffat, of course, pronounced it correctly, but generally wrote it Taung, except when writing to Sechwana scholars. The word Tau means lion, the ñ signifies the locative, so the name really means the "place of the lion," but probably it was called after a chief of that name. The people round Lake Ngami are an offshoot of the Bechwana, and call themselves Ba-tau-wana—i.e. people of Tau.

The Boers, past-masters in the art of setting natives against natives to suit their own ends, industriously stirred these muddy waters, ably seconded, it must be admitted, by Englishmen and Colonials living in the native territories, who had nothing much to lose and everything to gain by such tactics. Except that this state of things illustrated the inherent weakness of the Central Government at Pretoria, it would perhaps be scarcely fair to charge the latter with any complicity in the matter, but that it connived at what its border burghers were doing cannot be doubted.

It had, as a matter of fact, quite enough to think about elsewhere, and was content to allow the border to look after itself.

Matters soon went from bad to worse. Dutch and English were found fighting in opposition or in unison in support of rival chiefs who, when pressed by their adversaries, applied indiscriminately to one or other side for assistance. Such aid, when given, had to be paid for, and grants of land and other concessions were readily given by harassed chiefs, who in their extremity were glad enough to purchase safety for the moment at any price, only to repudiate their obligations as soon as fortune began to smile upon them once more. Out of this turmoil two independent Republics emerged, both of them carved out of native territory by men whose claims to the land might be likened to that of a person who, after assisting to extinguish a fire which he himself kindled, should demand the property as his reward. The establishment of these two independent states brought things to a crisis, involving as it did the High Contracting parties to the Convention. It seemed at first that Great Britain intended reprehensibly to stand aloof, and the Transvaal Government hastened as honest broker to put a finger in the pie, evidently intending to treat the Convention as a dead letter.

But at the last moment the spell that had seemed to bind the Paramount Power broke and she shook off her lethargy. A military force was dispatched under Sir Charles Warren, and at once the air began to clear. The Transvaal Republic, assuming an air of angel injured innocence, cooed like any sucking dove, realising that the time was not yet ripe for any other rôle.

The net result was that the Republics of Stellaland and Goshen, having had their brief day, ceased to be, and British authority took their place. Some of the Boers accepted the position; others betook themselves elsewhere, having sorrowfully realised that the days of Lands of Promise had passed away never to return. Once again, as had happened in Basutoland, order began to take the place of chaos, though owing to the cheese-paring policy adopted by the British Government, the newly-appointed administrator, Sir Sidney Shippard, and his staff were much hampered in the task of reconstruction. Nevertheless, more settled conditions soon prevailed in this distressed land. Taungs, the residence of Mankurwane, chief of the Batlapin tribe, was selected as the seat of a magistracy, which included also the district and station of Kuruman ninety miles to the west. Fortunately for Moffat, the missionary in charge there at this time was his own brother-in-law, the Rev. Roger Price, for all those with whom he had joined issue in former times had been transferred to other places; consequently, when his duties took him to Kuruman his visits involved no personal unpleasantness, though they could not fail to revive many painful memories.

It must have been a curious and in some ways a melancholy experience to return to his old station no longer as a missionary, but as the representative of law and order. To the natives, especially the older among them who could remember the first coming of the missionaries, it may have suggested long, long thoughts; the transformation of their former teacher into a magistrate would illustrate and symbolise the sequence of events, which they could trace step by step in their past experience, for in this land, as had often happened before, the preacher of the gospel, though he came originally in peace, in the end had brought a sword. As Moffat himself put it when writing on the influence of missions, "there is no blinking the fact that the tendency of Christianity is to overturn native governments. The process of enlightenment is not rapid or general enough to bring in a new order as an immediate substitute, and the result is a pitiful confusion and disintegration of the tribal system without any better system to take its place, a state of things for which there is no remedy but annexation by a civilised Power."

Moffat's first visit to his old home must have been a most trying one, and concerning it he writes to his sister :

TAUNG,
January 10, 1886.

“ I felt pretty well used up on my arrival here yesterday from Kuruman. It was not merely the fatigue of riding there and back, but the constant stretch the whole time. It was a mingled experience, but I am glad I went. Of course I missed many old faces, and many of the young people have grown out of recognition. Poor old Molose (a former servant) went to my heart. He works in the old garden. I peeped in on the first afternoon as I passed, but had to turn back. I could not bear it, it looked so dreadfully sad and neglected. I went by myself the last thing. I found Molose there, and we stood together for a few minutes looking around us, saying little but thinking unutterable things. This was only one of the many episodes into which no stranger could enter, and I do not think that even R. and B. could quite know the tumult of feeling which was surging within sometimes.

It was a trial to get up in the old pulpit, and at first I thought I should have to come down again. The people look poor and dirty and the village is much diminished. There has not been much progress, and in some ways there has been retrogression. However, a new and a fair start is being made. I need not say that there were many inquiries about you.”

Whatever may have been the feelings of the natives concerning Moffat's changed status, they soon realised the benefit of having as their magistrate one to whom they could look for impartial justice, one, moreover, who could speak their language and who could carry on his court without the assistance of an interpreter. This was an inestimable advantage, for probably no more fruitful source of mischief exists than that which results from attempting to administer justice through the tortuous channels of interpretation.

For the next two years, from his magisterial bench at Taungs, Moffat was busy doing his share in assisting to restore more normal conditions. As compared with what it had been ten years previously, the state of affairs was

deplorable in the extreme. Cattle and horse thieving had become a recognised institution. Gun-running and grog-selling were carried on openly and shamelessly, so that what had been a peaceful, law-abiding community had been transformed into a veritable den of thieves. So much for the influence of civilisation upon a primitive people just emerging from heathenism under the fostering care of devoted missionaries, whose work had been undermined and in great measure destroyed by those who nominally professed the same religion as themselves !

Moffat's name soon became a terror to all evil-doers, especially those engaged in the nefarious drink traffic, and it is needless to say that by a certain class he became the most hated man in Bechwanaland. Speaking generally his life at Taungs was uneventful. From a social point of view it left much to be desired. The place was little more than a police camp with a few traders' shops, and of congenial companionship there was none. Nothing but the knowledge that his presence afforded some measure of protection to his Bechwana friends reconciled him to a wearisome and in many ways irksome existence.

In a letter to a niece living in Germany, whom he had visited the previous year, he gives a pen-picture of his surroundings :

November 15, 1885.

“What a contrast between this time last year and now ! Then it was cool and moist among your beautiful woods ; now it is a blazing South African sun with a brilliantly clear atmosphere. I wonder if I can give you a picture of my surroundings. I am sitting in my Sechwana hut which is my den. I sleep and sit in it, but go over to the officers' mess at the police camp for my meals. The hut is round, about twenty feet in diameter, the walls of wattle and daub about seven feet high, the thatched roof conical. It is furnished with some simple camp articles. Outside is a circular hedge of sticks about five feet high, leaving a yard in front. When I go outside and stand in the gateway of my courtyard I am looking east. Our huts, my clerk's and mine, are on a low sandy ridge. Right in front of us is the camp and fort about two hundred yards away, where there is a detachment of mounted police, about a hundred men. These are not more than enough to patrol my district, which is three hundred miles

long. Beyond the police camp the ridge terminates abruptly overhanging the river, which is generally merely a chain of stagnant pools. Behind my hut and still on the ridge a mile away commences a scattered wood of camel-thorn trees. To the right and left the ground sinks off. On the left there is a range of hills about two miles away all along which lies, straggling, Mankurwane's town, which consists of about two thousand huts; in the valley between are four or five European buildings, hotel and shops.

To the right lies a low plain of a dull brownish grey appearance, and beyond is a long grey ridge with a horizon almost as level as that of the sea.

As the rainy season is coming on there are patches of green, but nowhere a vivid green. If we have not that we have the blue; and if report be correct about Italian skies, you know what a blue sky is, for you have been there. When I go out in the morning, as to-day at breakfast time, there is not a speck, and as I look up and around there is something in that lovely blue so exquisite that it almost brings a lump into my throat. Now at 11.30 the scene is changed. Detached masses of fleecy clouds are crowding up from the west like a great fleet of ships under full sail. This evening we shall likely have a thunderstorm."

Moffat's knowledge of the people, their chiefs and tribal history, proved invaluable to the administrator, Sir Sidney Shippard, and their relations were of the happiest. As illustrating the advantage to the Government and the people of his presence, the following incident, described in a letter to his wife, is of interest and may be related here, though it took place after he had left Taungs to take up his duties in the Protectorate.

It must be explained that the "Boyale" referred to is the ceremony of initiation to which girls are subjected when they reach the age of puberty. The missionaries, regarding it as a heathen rite, frowned upon the whole proceeding, and it was a never-failing source of strife between the Christian and heathen parties. Children of Christian parents would sometimes participate in the forbidden mysteries, either voluntarily or as a result of pressure from the other side, and trouble would thereby ensue.

KANYE,
September 18, 1887.

"We have been in a great state of excitement here. Yesterday some of the church members determined to go and get away a girl who had run away to the Boyale. Mr. Good (the missionary) had advised them to take her out by force. I had my misgivings; I wish now I had given expression to them. Mr. Good left on Friday to spend Sunday at an out station.

Last night the native schoolmaster and a companion came rushing down. The attack on the Boyale had resulted in a mob riot. Fire had been set to their houses, and unhappily to the houses of a good many others, and it seemed at first as if the whole place would be in a blaze. These poor folk had lost everything, and it was determined to take the lives of at least two of them. They slept at the mission-house with two or three more, and I too, for Mrs. Good was so frightened that there was no alternative.

Early next morning I went up to the town, and am thankful I was led to do so. There was a great 'Pitso' on (meeting or pow-wow), and all the heathen villainy of the town foaming and gnashing its teeth. I think I was the means of stopping a catastrophe, for they were working themselves up for murder and rapine, and the poor weak old chief was not able to stem the tide alone, though I think he really wished to do so. The outcome of the meeting was that there was to be no more, and a truce was declared. I came back and sent up the schoolmaster under an escort of two policemen, who handed him over to the chief, and there the matter has, I hope, ended."

How often has it not happened, when disturbances of the peace among natives were brewing, that those whose duty it has been to investigate have been crassly incompetent or ill selected. As often as not, perhaps, a couple of policemen, ignorant of the language and ready enough to add fuel to the flames by way of creating a little diversion in order to break the monotony of their existence.

In a moment the mischief may be done, and, spreading like fire in stubble, it may set the whole country in a blaze. Instead of that, here we find one unarmed, peace-loving

man pouring oil on troubled waters, and by the weight of his personal influence averting disaster.

As already stated, a Protectorate had been proclaimed over North Bechwanaland, but as usual the British Government showed no eagerness to shoulder its responsibilities. In part this may have been due to the disinclination to face further expenditure of money, but in addition there lay the thorny question of boundaries, which the Government desired to shirk as long as possible. The "scramble for Africa" had begun, and other European Powers were, or professed to be, concerned. Portugal on the east, Germany on the west, were watching developments, the former jealous for ancient rights, the latter hungrily coveting a place in this particular patch of sunshine.

Any further extension of British spheres of influence might raise diplomatic questions, and the Home Government, beset with many domestic troubles, would fain have been content to follow a policy of masterly inactivity, and used every expedient to avoid facing the issue.

Writing from Taungs in 1886 Moffat remarks:

"Nowadays African affairs are allowed to drift, and will drift until they get into another tangle. The British Government is a poor master to serve these days in outlying places of the world. It seems to me there is a want of nervous energy in John Bull's extremities. If it goes on much longer in this way, it will be better soon for him to drop his colonies to sink or swim for themselves, and to confine himself to affairs within the four seas which surround Great Britain (less Ireland). When the Conservatives are in they rule only provisionally, and their rule is therefore weak; when the Liberals are in they are wagged by their Radical tail, whose motto is, 'Perish the Colonies.' We do not want to be gobbled up by Germany or some other military Power, otherwise we would resign ourselves to accepting our independence, and we would not look the gift horse too closely in the mouth."

That a patriotic Briton like Moffat could write in this strain shows how England's fatuous Colonial policy was sapping the loyalty of her much-tried sons. But eventually some movement became discernible among the dry bones,

and the first evident sign of this was the appointment of Moffat in June 1887 as Assistant Commissioner for the Bechwanaland Protectorate, which up to this time had existed only on paper.

In point of fact it was only the forward policy of the Transvaal that finally galvanised Great Britain into activity. Foiled in Bechwanaland, the Republic had turned its eyes elsewhere, and it had become plain that its Government had no intention of remaining idle in the matter of extension to the north. Its general attitude had not been so friendly as to justify Great Britain's taking any further risks, and Moffat's appointment represented the first counter-move.

As events proved, this had been made none too soon. The Protectorate did not include Matabeleland, and emissaries from the Transvaal Republic were already busy angling with Lobengula. When this became known Moffat, who had only just concluded a preliminary tour round the Protectorate, was ordered to proceed at once to Matabeleland. Though nominally he continued to hold the post of Assistant Commissioner for the Protectorate, he became for the next five years virtually a kind of peripatetic British Representative in Matabeleland. During this period he had no other home but his ox-wagon, in which he travelled far and wide, making no less than six journeys into Matabeleland, beside several others throughout the Protectorate. He was accompanied on these occasions by an escort of four or five mounted policemen, who acted as dispatch riders and orderlies. As a means of protection the utility of such a small body of men was negligible, but their presence, more especially in Matabeleland, served to give an official stamp to his mission, and to a certain extent differentiated it from the many private visitations that Lobengula was receiving about this time.

CHAPTER XX

MATABELELAND, 1887-1890

ON October 31, 1887, Moffat left Shoshong, Khama's town, and once more followed the old trail towards Matabeleland. Twenty-two years had come and gone since last he had passed this way, and every mile must have teemed with recollections of other and perhaps more hopeful days. As he journeyed on and approached his destination, it came upon him with something of a shock to find that the Matabele remained much as he had left them. For them it seemed as though time's flight had been arrested, and the vanished years had brought no sign or hint of progress. Outwardly his own circumstances had altered, but it was the old setting in which fate now called upon him to play a different rôle.

True, the track that the wagons of his party had made in 1859 had now become a more or less beaten highway. Traders in ever-increasing numbers had followed, and the country had become the happy hunting-ground for sportsmen and elephant hunters, who in a measure had helped to draw aside the veil that had formerly shrouded this unknown land. But the Matabele themselves were unchanged.

Mosilikatze had long since been gathered to his fathers, and his son Lobengula reigned in his stead; but the advancing tide of civilisation had not yet touched his land, though the murmur of its approach had begun to sound, perhaps ominously, in his ears.

For the present he still ruled as a barbaric despot, and as such his name may perhaps go down to posterity as the last pure example of that personal absolutism for which the world has now no place.

Moffat's political work in Matabeleland is dealt with separately, but the following outline of his life during the

next five years is based upon letters and diaries. He arrived at Bulawayo on November 27, and had his first audience with Lobengula on December 1. Once more fate had brought them together, this time into a relationship that was to result in tragedy. They had known each other in younger days, and now in middle life they were again face to face, though under altered conditions. In point of age there was little difference between them, but of the two Moffat had changed the less since last they had met, for the added toll of years had scarcely yet begun to show their marks, and he was still at the zenith of his powers, physical and mental. To outward seeming he came in a new guise, for he represented himself now as the herald not of a Divine but of an earthly power; yet his purposes and ideals remained as before, since he sought only to bring light and deliverance to a land of bondage. The condition of its inhabitants excited in him feelings of deepest pity and compassion, so that, judged by his aims, he might still have been the zealous missionary who long years before had preached the gospel to Mosilikatze and his people. The untutored mind of Lobengula, then heir apparent, had failed or been unwilling to grasp the significance of that message, and in virtue of the inexorable law that entails degradation in default of progress, time had not failed of its revenge.

The proud young warrior of those days had now become the prematurely aged chief, brutalised by unbridled licence and by the exercise of despotic power.

But both he and many of his people still remembered, not only Moffat himself, but Umshete, the friend of Mosilikatze, and for his father's sake as well as his own Moffat received a warm personal welcome. When it came to a matter of discussing politics, the chief at first assumed a recalcitrant attitude, for in truth he was beginning to be suspicious of concession hunters and treaty makers, whom, in fact, he only tolerated or favoured in return for what he could get out of them.

Moffat's duties during this and subsequent visits involved the exercise of much tact and patience, and in many ways it was a harrowing existence, the difficulties of which were greatly aggravated by the nerveless policy of those whom he represented.

It was essential that he should keep in touch with Loben-

gula, but the latter led a migratory life and his movements were erratic in the extreme; here to-day, he would be gone to-morrow without a word of warning, travelling from one of his kraals to another, and Moffat had to be ready to follow at a moment's notice.

At other times he would remain for weeks at his capital, Bulawayo,¹ and except for an occasional audience Moffat would have little to do. He had to stand by waiting to be of service, and the cross-currents of political affairs in Matabeleland during these years ran in such conflicting, turbid streams, that time and again a word of advice or explanation from him would save the situation, in spite of those who were working for evil.

BULAWAYO,

December 6, 1887.

"I have enough to occupy me, but my escort must find time hang heavily on their hands during the long periods when we have to hold on at a place like this. I have been here just a week and expect to be quite two months, and there is nothing for them to do, not even a little shooting. They are a decent lot of fellows, but not smart. If I send them on any business they are bound to lose the road or make some muddle, and I never can make out things correctly from them. They say forty yards when it is perhaps a quarter of a mile and so on. But you know how inaccurate people are in the Colony; I fancy more so than in England, where the pressure of things makes it a serious thing to make loose statements. We are a young nation and have to complete our education in many ways, and this is one.

I was wondering a good deal what change and progress I should notice in the matter of missionary work after an absence of twenty-two years. I have not had time to judge yet, but I fear things are very little further than

¹ The author is indebted to the Rev. Bowen Rees, who for many years has been a missionary in Matabeleland, for the following note on the derivation and meaning of the name Bulawayo:

"The infinitive form of the word is *ugubulala*—to kill; the name was given originally to a regiment which was called Bulawayo. The great King Chaka down in Zululand had a regiment bearing the same name in his days. Regiments carried their names with them wherever they shifted their town, and so our historic town, Bulawayo, has nothing directly to convey that there were more executions taking place there than anywhere else. The former Bulawayo was about fifteen miles away from the Bulawayo which the Chartered Company took over and burnt down (on which site the present town stands). In the time of Umziligazi, Lobengula's father, Inyati was the capital."

when I left. It is a remarkable case. I do not know that a similar one exists in the annals of Missions; but I fear that there will be no change for the better until there has been a breaking-up of the Matabele power and a change in the whole regime. The despotism is as absolute as ever, and there is another power, dark and grim, which flourishes under the despotism, and that is superstition. Any wicked man or woman who cherishes a grudge against his neighbour can get that grudge gratified by setting in motion the charge of witchcraft. One word will often do it, uttered craftily at the right juncture, and the person is done for. The idea spreads abroad and that life is doomed, all the more so if it be a person possessing cattle. Sooner or later, without trial, without a chance of self-defence, the word goes out and the death-blow is given.

Apparently things are no better in this respect than they were twenty-five years ago. It is a mournful picture, one that represents a state of things which cannot be surpassed. Never have I seen a community where the people live more like the beasts that perish, except that the latter are much better off, for they do not, as far as we know, foresee death hanging over them every day of their lives."

BULAWAYO,
January 18, 1888.

"Here I am! beginning to think it is time for this sort of existence to have a little variety introduced into it. I have been seven weeks dancing attendance upon the Matabele chief; probably I shall have about three weeks more, and then it will be southward ho! I can always find something to do: I have to rub up my Setebele (i.e. the language) a bit, or rather a good deal, for twenty-two years have given me time to forget most of it. I do a little reading, I am sorry to say mostly of the lighter sort, for who could read political economy, say, in the tropics with flies bothering in the day and beetles and things at night? Except for the missionary at Hope Fountain, Mr. Carnegie, there is no other European in the country that I care to have ten minutes' conversation with, at least for any enjoyment of it.¹ They are mostly ne'er-do-weels, who are here because

¹ This remark must not be taken as applicable to the whole period of Moffat's residence in Matabeleland. There were several of the "old hands"—men like Mr. A. Boggie and Mr. "Matabele" Wilson—for whom he had the highest regard, in whose integrity he placed implicit trust.

it suits their habits, or because they came here with false hopes and cannot get away again. Unfortunately I do not see much of the Matabele—for if I felt I could be doing a little missionary work among them it would reconcile me to the tedious exile; but visitors to my camp only have one idea, that is to get something to eat or to wear. I do not care to pamper their greediness in order to attract them, or to foster the idea that attendance at a service or even listening to a religious talk is a thing to be paid for. I want something to bring me more into contact with the people without its being a mere sordid consideration of something to get.

If I had a little medical skill that would be a help, but I am resolutely opposed to giving help for nothing, except in cases of emergency, and I am not sufficiently confident of the value of my services to accept anything for them.

The Matabele Mission is a study. It was eight and twenty years ago last Christmas that we settled at Inyati. A few individuals may have been influenced for good, but there is no organic result, by which I mean that there do not seem to be three, or even two, people of the tribe who trust each other and recognise each other as Christians. In my stay with the chief I have seen no indication that the life of the tribe is in any way touched by the Gospel. Far be it from me to say that the missionaries are not faithful, but I do not think the way they are working will bring a change.

For instance, there is Hope Fountain fifteen miles away from headquarters, and Mr. Carnegie comes over scarcely once in three weeks. I have been over there on and off for a day. A few people come for medicine or to sell a little corn or a sheep. No one lives on the spot except Mr. Carnegie's own herd-boys and a couple of helps, but so badly furnished are missionary and wife that they have to spend most of their time in pottering about doing things which elsewhere would be done by servants. So it seems to have been going on all these years. I perhaps have scarcely a right to say much, for some might turn round and say, 'You were a deserter.' Yes, I admit it. Your mother lived a life of weakness and suffering at Inyati, caused by struggling with duties which were too heavy and which required the unobtainable luxury of servants. Had we felt that any results were being obtained by this suffering

we would have stayed on, but we felt that it was labour in vain, and so the result has proved. Others have come and done their best; what is there to show for it?

The course which it appears to me ought to be adopted I do not think I should have the courage to undertake myself.¹ A missionary ought to live here, with the chief, to be within daily call, and making himself useful to the chief in the way that one or two men do, who live here carrying on trade. They are men who drink and keep black mistresses, and yet they are men who see most of the chief and have most influence not only over him, but over his indunas. This ought not to be, or at least there ought to be a missionary as much and as near to him. But it needs to be a man without a wife, who would move when the chief moves, which he does pretty often; in fact a man who would be prepared to live mostly in a wagon and tent. Such a man, to live alone, must be deeply imbued with God's Spirit in order to have strength to stand against the deadening and corrupting influence around him. I feel it during my comparatively short stay here; and I am like a man looking forward to getting back to the sweet air and bright sunshine after being in a coal-mine.

I pity the people from the chief downwards. I believe he knows and feels much that it would cost him his position to confess, and every one of them in his own particular environment down to the meanest slave is encompassed by bands of steel which make it almost impossible for him to become a Christian."

In February 1888 Moffat came out from Matabeleland, but returned on his second visit in August of that year.

The exploitation of the country was now rapidly progressing, and a powerful mining syndicate, which later became the Chartered Company, was at this time pressing Lobengula for a concession.

Moffat, as representative of the Government, had to watch the proceedings carefully, but otherwise had nothing whatever to do with them.

¹ When Moffat's departure from Kuruman was first mooted in 1876, he wrote to the Directors of the Society offering—if they would arrange for his wife and family to go to England or the Colony—to return for four years to Matabeleland, with a view to taking up the exact line of work that he here advocates.

MATABELELAND, UMGUZA RIVER,
September 11, 1888.

“ It will be three weeks to-morrow since we arrived at headquarters, and I have the prospect of a considerable stay here, at all events another two months. The prospect is not a pleasant one, but I don't look at it and concentrate my thoughts on each day's affairs. There is very little to be done politically. It is a case of sitting still and watching for the right time at which to put in a word. Little more than this can be done, in fact the danger is of being too meddling and doing too much. The Matabele are rigorously conservative, and they have the notion that they are the people, and that they can fight the Boers or even the English. The chief knows better, but he is hampered by the ignorance of his people. It is a problem which occupies my thoughts night and day, how we are to avoid the impending collision. The tide of white enterprise is setting northwards; it is already becoming perceptible to Lobengula, and he may soon be driven to show what he thinks of it by closing his country against the visitors who are coming in ever increasing numbers to seek gold concessions from him. The problem is complicated by the fact that the Transvaal is close by, and that the Boers are not only our rivals, but do not scruple to tell falsehoods to cross our interests, and between the two, English and Boers, Lobengula gets sorely perplexed. I should get harassed out of my life if I could not fall back upon the grand truth that there is above all these things the Lord of the whole earth who is carrying out His own plan, and we are only instruments. To me the only solution of the difficulty is the breaking up of this tribe; but I should be sorry to be the intermediary, for sooner or later I should have to be the herald of war, and not of peace. I trust that by that time God will have found me some other sort of work for me to do. There is some talk of the whole tribe migrating to the north side of the Zambezi; I hope not, for that simply means carrying thither the same murderous system which they have carried out here—the ruthless harrying of tribe after tribe till there is nothing left but a succession of vast solitudes, which the Matabele neither occupy themselves nor allow others to occupy. I often feel how nice it would be to be back on some quiet missionary station with none of these problems to revolve; but I suppose that everyone

feels like this at times, and I am where God means me to be."

In October Moffat left Matabeleland, and the following letter was written on his journey out :

SHASHANE RIVER,
November 2, 1888.

"We are now on our way out, and have accomplished about fifty of the five hundred miles between Bulawayo and Mafeking. Our oxen are so poor and the country so dry that we cannot do more than about ten miles a day. It is hardly possible for anyone who has not seen it to imagine the difference that the season of the year makes to this country, especially if, as now, the rains are long in beginning. There would always be plenty of grass if the natives did not burn it off in the winter. These grass fires also destroy many trees, and the country is not half so thickly wooded as it might be. I suppose a century hence men will be found with great care and expense planting millions of trees in the place of those which have been recklessly destroyed by their predecessors.

I notice another sad difference in this Matabele country south of Matabeleland. The people are so much fewer than they were thirty years ago. They have all been killed or have fled to other lands to avoid being killed by their tyrannical neighbours the Matabele.

In this respect the latter are unchanged, and I feel much less desire than I used to do to see them treated with any consideration.

As a military power it will be a blessing to the world when they are broken up. When I say this, do not mistake me. I would not do anything to bring about such a result, or to break such faith as there may be between us and them, but I am sure that their days are numbered."

In April 1889 he was back again in Matabeleland, his stay on this occasion being prolonged for eleven months.

NGOTWANE RIVER *en route to* MATABELELAND,
March 24, 1889.

"Here I am on my way northwards again without having had my proposed visit to Graham's Town. The High Commissioner has such an exaggerated idea of the need of my presence in Matabeleland that he would not hear of my tak-

ing leave of absence. I do not feel very hearty about going up, especially as the Government is not to my mind pursuing a wise course; but Government service is like everything else, subordinates must obey orders, and then bear the blame if those orders turn out to have been unwise. From the human point of view the world is governed with an utter absence of real wisdom; the only way that it can be explained is that men, who seem to be doing so much carrying out their own plans, are mere unconscious instruments whom God is using to carry out His own much wiser and larger plans. I have told the Government that I am not prepared to spend the whole of my time in Matabeleland; no such stipulation was made in my appointment, which was to be Bechwanaland Protectorate, with an occasional visit to Matabeleland. The promise has been made that a separate appointment shall be asked for of the Home Government, and that, if I only go up this once more, someone will be sent to relieve me; after which I can concentrate my attention on the Protectorate and have a somewhat more settled life. So I am on my way to Loben's again, but with the hope that it may be my last trip, and that if I am spared to come back, it will be to some kind of reunion with your mother and the family. I have been visiting the chiefs in the Protectorate, preparing their minds for the passage through the country of about two hundred police, who are to go to the borders of Khama's country to watch the action of a quantity of filibusters whom we are expecting from the Transvaal for an invasion of Khama's country, repeating the old game which was played in Mankurwane's country before the Warren expedition was sent up."

UMGUZA RIVER,
May 9, 1889.

"I have settled down again, if settling down it can be called, into the monotonous camp life here. The people are quieter than they were last time; there are none of the exciting causes which existed then, and the life is an endurable one. I do not spend much time with the chief; there are too many white men about, and intercourse, I mean free interchange of thought, with a despot surrounded by sycophants is at any time difficult.

The people will come round, but alas! they have but one

thought, and that is begging. It seems impossible to get them away from this one idea. Beyond that, they take no interest in you or in anything you have to say to them. Poor creatures ! there seems to be no hope until the existing order of things is broken up. The missionaries live a life deadening to themselves and not exercising the slightest influence upon those around them. I say this confidently, for I know what the people are now and what they were thirty years ago.

There is a big gold syndicate which has got an entry into this country and probably will keep it, and that means eventually collision, unless history here should be different from history elsewhere in South Africa."

HEADQUARTERS, UMGUZA RIVER,
June 30, 1889.

"It is just two months since I reached the chief's headquarters.

My stay this time has been a good deal varied. First I spent a fortnight with the chief, during which several of the party were down with fever and my wagon driver died. We then moved over to Hope Fountain for a fortnight for a change, and also to get rid of awkward questions about ceremonial. According to Matabele customs, no one can approach the chief for a certain time after death in his household. Hope Fountain is high and healthy and the invalids soon get better. We had been back here just a fortnight when for some mysterious reason or other we were requested to move again to Hope Fountain, the other white men, or at least most of them, being sent off to other places. Not one of us knows what it all means. So we had another fortnight at Hope Fountain.

The Matabele are a miserable people, and have made myriads of other people miserable too. One daughter of the chief hung herself last week ; this makes three of his children who have committed suicide. Another also tried to do so last week, but was prevented in time. One of the old wives of the late chief Mosilikatze cut her throat a month ago. The induna of a kraal near Hope Fountain died lately. Two of the wives are daily expecting to be murdered on the charge of having bewitched him. These things are what may be called the upper circle. Mean-

while the common people are awfully oppressed and there is no court of appeal for them—not in this world at least.”

Such were the scenes of misery and injustice of which Moffat had, almost daily, to be the unwilling and helpless spectator. Here life indeed had “death for neighbour,” for under this bloody tyranny short shrift was the portion of anyone so unfortunate as to offend his sovereign lord. Retribution swift and pitiless followed however blameless the victim, as the following entries in Moffat’s journal show :

December 2.

“Heavy rain. Yesterday one of the chief’s wagons with all its contents, in trying to cross the Umguza, was washed away.”

December 3.

“The man who was in charge of the chief’s wagon lost on Sunday was taken down this morning and drowned in the Umguza by being thrown in bound hand and foot. It seems that the chief had given orders that the wagon was to cross lower down, but the mule driver whom the Company had sent with their mules at the request of the chief had overruled this and brought the wagon along the usual road.”

MATABELELAND,
October 24, 1889.

“The principal thing occupying my present thoughts has been a request from the Chartered Company to remain here as Government Representative.

The prospect is not inviting in spite of liberal terms offered ; but if it should prove to be duty, I shall not feel that it is right to shirk it.

I am not closing at once with the request ; it is too weighty a matter to decide about in a week. It weighs very much with me that God seems to have brought me back in spite of myself to these Matabele, and there is some sort of duty toward them—higher than mere official relation, as precious and noble, in fact, as any I could discharge were I in the pay of the London Missionary Society.

Yet it means a still larger severance from wife and children—and a distinctly nearer approach of the death angel, either by force of climate or the risky conditions involved in the delicate position between the white in-

truder and so fierce and turbulent a race as this. I don't think I fear death more than most men, but I have so long cherished a vision of a few tranquil years at the close with your mother, from whom I have been now nine years separated. Well, so be it! if God wills it; as old Thomas à Kempis has it, 'Go whither thou wilt, thou shalt find no rest but in humble subjection under a Government of a Superior.' That Superior has borne me up hitherto and will."

BULAWAYO,

December 13, 1889.

"The position I have been asked to accept is a Government appointment, but it is really to be paid for by the Company. I have not yet accepted, but have brought up my grievances and one or two important considerations as reasons why I should hesitate. The Government made a great mistake which has given rise to endless trouble in allowing that embassy of Matabele to interview the Queen. Sir Sidney Shippard and I were both studiously passed by and ignored, and it has impaired my influence in the country. I have told them that, in the event of my accepting the appointment, this sort of thing will never do; there must be one channel of communication and one only between the chief and the Government. The man who took home those envoys did it simply as an agent of a rival syndicate to try and upset the concession obtained by Rhodes' people. There are other reasons, but I cannot go further into the matter; I should like to shirk it, but if it is duty I dare not, and I want to see clearly that it is duty. As a family matter it bears a serious aspect. It means indefinite prolongation of a long life away from your mother and what is left of the household, but it seems likely that, like our progenitors, we shall scatter far and wide. We have had our ups and downs, but it has been a happy family life, and now it is vanishing away."

His protracted stay on this occasion sorely tried Moffat's patience, especially as there did not appear to be any valid reason for it beyond the fact that the authorities seemed fearful of leaving Lobengula alone. The Chartered Company was still busy consolidating its position and maturing its plans, while many disappointed concession seekers in the country were doing their utmost to thwart it or to imperil its existence.

Lobengula had already begun to regret his bargain, and unscrupulous adventurers were quick to seize any and every opportunity for poisoning his mind by suggesting base insinuations and by retailing falsehoods into his willing ear. The so-called embassy, consisting of two Matabele, which had been taken to England by a rival syndicate had done great harm owing to the misguided action of the Imperial authorities in recognising it. The promoter of the scheme had long been trying to represent himself to Lobengula as the direct representative of the Imperial Government, as opposed to Moffat, who he wished the chief to believe was only an agent of the Cape Government and the Chartered Company. The reception of the envoys in England tended to support this view, and the whole affair had much undermined the prestige of the new Government and the influence of Moffat. In order to remove this unfortunate impression, the Government arranged to send a special envoy from the Queen who should be introduced by Moffat himself, and it was hoped that this would serve incidentally to emphasise the latter's position as representative of his Sovereign.

By way of appealing to the military spirit of the Matabele, the Royal message was carried by two selected officers of the Royal Horse Guards.

The appearance of these stalwarts in full-dress uniform created a great sensation, and the covert exhibition of the armed power around the throne of the great Queen could not fail to impress the young, hot-headed Matabele warriors, whose ignorance and conceit were unbounded. The following account of their presentation to the chief is given by Moffat in his diary :

Feb. 6.—"The chief sent for the Queen's envoys, Captain Fergusson and Surgeon-Major Melladew.

It was eight o'clock when we went, but we were too early. We sat on chairs in the verandah, but it was nearly eleven before the chief came out in his perambulator. He then called the Imbizo Regiment, who came into the Isogodlo. A pile of meat, the flesh of four oxen, lay in a skin in the middle. Four large beer baskets were brought in and filled with beer. I computed the whole quantity first-fills and supplementary supply at 150 gallons. The Imbizo went through some evolutions—they divided into three

bands, and two of these would rush up against each other raising their hands; an apt resemblance to two opposing waves dashing together and throwing up spray. They then drew back from each other with a loud roar, stamping their feet in quick succession.

The third body then rushed across and there was a general change of places very well done without any clubbing. Up to this time they had had nothing in their hands, but afterwards knobkerries turned up from somewhere and they fell into their usual order, a semicircle deeper in the centre, and chanted and danced with great energy. Then the induna went down on his hands and knees and took a long drink out of one of the baskets; then the men came forward, at first in batches, but afterwards the struggle and scramble grew fierce and the baskets were eventually squeezed almost flat. A second filling took place and there was a repetition, after which there was a long dance and then the meat was scrambled for, batches of men struggling for the possession of a leg or a shoulder as the case might be. This was the signal for a clearance and we took our leave."

Whether this deputation fulfilled the expectations of its promoters it is impossible to say, but shortly after its departure Moffat was himself able to leave Matabeleland with the feeling that matters were progressing as favourably as could be expected. His hope that this would be his last visit to Lobengula was not destined to be realised. The Chartered Company were now preparing to occupy Mashonaland in accordance with the terms of their concession, but they feared that the passage of an imposing cavalcade along the eastern border might upset the equanimity of the Matabele.

Violence at this stage was the one thing that the Directors wished to avoid, and so high an opinion did they set on Moffat's presence in Matabeleland that they agreed to provide the funds if the Government would appoint him British Resident for the next two years.

BULAWAYO,
January 5, 1890.

"I have agreed to accept the appointment provided my own stipulations are granted, one of which is that there

must be no more fooling with quasi-official deputations like that of Maund. A greater farce never was; it was just a plan of the Cawston syndicate for their own purposes. They paid the whole expenses themselves, and so far have had no refund from the chief. I am not quite sure yet that the thing is settled. Sir Hercules Robinson, whom I trusted, has been away all these months, and his successor, Sir H. B. Loch, has not yet arrived.

Things are about as satisfactory as can reasonably be expected. The Chartered Company is working slowly and patiently, and so far as the chief is concerned there is little difficulty. The danger is in the rowdy element of the tribe, the young bloods who are not well in hand, and they will eventually cause a collision, there can be little doubt of that. I do not enter upon my appointment with a light heart seeing that it will be little short of a miracle if the problem is worked out without a war. So far I have enjoyed a delightful obscurity; my name never appears in the papers, as you may have discovered, but if a victim is wanted they will dig me out fast enough. The chief has the gout. There is a Dr. Jameson here who is treating him, but the chief's idea of regimen is hopeless. He gets it now every year about this time; strange that, with all his means and power, he will live like a bushman, and consequently with naked feet on the damp ground and no exercise he's bound to suffer. He has a large brick house here, but he chooses to go camping round at his cattle posts. He is at present at Enjugeni, about three miles away, where it is all mud and slush, for we are having the rains properly this year."

BULAWAYO,

February 9, 1890.

"I hope very shortly to be starting for a change, which I need very much, being much run down. I have been waiting the last week or two on account of the visit of the special envoy, Captain Fergusson of the Royal Horse Guards, who has brought a letter from the Government. It was important that I should be here to present them to the chief and to read the letter. They were, of course, longer in getting here than was calculated upon, and now the great dance is on neither I nor the envoy and his companions can leave till that is over.

He is a jolly fellow; he is accompanied by Surgeon-Major Melladew of the same regiment and two subordinates. They make a great show in their complete uniform. There are about 8,000 Matabele in camp here around us. They are behaving extremely well; such civility and good feeling are a testimony to the success with which the representatives of the Company have earnestly followed a peaceful policy, which I really hope they will be able to continue. The only danger is from the mean whites, of whom we have a few about, and they are vile enough to tell any lie which will suit their own selfish and short-sighted policy. Thus far the success of friendly negotiation has been beyond the most sanguine expectations that could have been entertained.

It is the earnest desire of the Company's agents here that no breach of the peace should come from their side."

CHAPTER XXI

MATABELELAND 1890-1892

THE Queen's envoy, having concluded his mission, departed, and a few days later, February 20, Moffat himself left Bulawayo. He reached Palapye, Khama's new town, on March 3, and then, after a short visit to the different chiefs in the Protectorate, he proceeded to Kimberley, where he arrived on April 14. There he made the acquaintance of the new Governor, Sir Henry Loch, who, accompanied by Mr. Rhodes and other Ministers, was paying his first visit to Kimberley, and an important conference on native affairs was held. Having had no holiday for two years, Moffat had hoped that he would be permitted to take leave of absence before returning for another spell of exile in Matabeleland, but this the Governor would not hear of.

Both he and the Company's officials were extremely anxious that he should return at once, and as subsequent events proved, it was well that he did not loiter. His wife had joined him the day after his arrival at Kimberley, and they had one short week together, after which Moffat again left for the north, on the way visiting the chiefs in the Protectorate.

The Pioneers were already marshalling for their trek into Mashonaland, and it remained to be seen what effect this unprecedented occurrence would have on the suspicious minds of the Matabele.

If any man could save the situation it was Moffat, and the hopes of all concerned centred upon him.

CROCODILE RIVER,
June 15, 1890.

"I am so far on my way back, and hope to post this at Palapye. Things are getting a little warm. I have to-day received a letter from one of the missionaries. It seems

they have cleared out of Matabeleland, and he writes from the Matloutsie River. This is a pity, for their departure will increase the excitement and aggravate the crisis, which I had hoped might be avoided. Mr. E.'s letter is so meagre that I am not able to judge whether they have acted wisely, but they speak of its being a matter of course that the white man will follow their example.

I hope to hear all about it when I get to Palapye, but it is provoking to have to do with people who cannot take the trouble to spend half an hour in giving you particulars when such important interests are at stake. I have at last had a clear recognition of realities regarding my appointment. There appears to be someone in the Colonial Office who has taken to reading my letters. I had a suspicion before that they were not read at all, and that it was no use saying things. I am explicitly told that my present appointment is only temporary, and that the whole question will be reconsidered at the end of 1891; that it is for service in Matabeleland, and that should I be recalled to some appointment in the Protectorate I must not expect the same salary.

It is so far satisfactory to know clearly what I am about.

I am very sorry to be leaving the Protectorate, or rather that I have never been allowed to attend to my duties there during the three years that I have been nominally Assistant Commissioner there.

Even if they appoint a man now and let him have a chance, much valuable time will have been lost."

Before reaching his destination, one item of interesting news of a personal kind overtook him. A despatch from the Administrator reached him forwarding a telegram from the Governor, which informed him that the Queen, in recognition of his services, had bestowed upon him the companionship of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. At that time orders and decorations were not awarded with such a lavish hand as in these latter days, when their value has so much depreciated, and it can safely be said that no member of this distinguished Order more thoroughly deserved this mark of his Sovereign's favour than he who had so worthily served her in the Transvaal, Basutoland, and more recently in Matabeleland.

To a man of Moffat's habit of thought such things,

however, counted for little, and had he followed his own inclinations he would have refused the proffered bauble. But he felt that to do so might appear eccentric, if not ungracious, and his deep loyalty to, and personal regard for, his Queen forbade him doing anything that might savour of disrespect. His comments on the subject are characteristic.

Replying to one who had congratulated him, on the ground that the honour indicated appreciation of his work, he wrote :

“ You seem pleased with the C.M.G. It is satisfactory when one looks at this side of it, though many better men than I have gone through the world without any such recognition, and some great duffers have got it.”

The farther he travelled towards Matabeleland the wilder and more disquieting were the reports that reached him ; but undeterred, he pushed steadily on prepared for anything that might befall him.

He arrived at Bulawayo on July 30, and, with the exception of a short visit to Palapye for refitting purposes, he remained in Matabeleland till December 1891.

For the first few months he had an anxious time ; how critical matters became none will ever know.

Lobengula with difficulty restrained his young bloods, and on several occasions the question whether it was to be peace or war hung perilously in the balance. The missionaries had already fled the country, and Moffat's position was rendered still more difficult by the foolish, not to say wicked, behaviour of the white men who had remained. Some by their hysterical nervousness helped to aggravate the tension, while others deliberately endeavoured to foment trouble.

In spite of all this the Pioneers passed by unmolested, and Mashonaland was occupied in peace. When the full story of Rhodesia comes to be written, may it not be forgotten or overlooked that the main credit for this must be awarded to the lonely British Representative who, with his little band of six Europeans,¹ sat quietly through all

¹ Moffat's party consisted of the following: his secretary, Robert Vavasseur, who later lost his life in the rebellion of 1896, when he was murdered on his farm ; and his escort, Troopers Scott, Robertson, Bailey, and Nutt, under Corporal Goodall, all of the Bechwanaland Border Police.

this critical time within a few miles of Lobengula's kraal, surrounded by thousands of truculent warriors thirsting for the blood of the white intruders.

MATABELELAND,
August 3, 1890.

“ We have now been here three weeks. Affairs are just on the turn—is it to be peace or is it to be war? That is the question which no man can give an answer to at this moment. So many want war. All the younger men in the country, who do not know what real war is, are longing for a fight on any pretext, and some of the indunas are with them. Others are with the chief, who is more sensible of the madness of provoking a conflict with the white man. Then on our side there are some who would like to have matters cut short by a war. So the odds are greatly against peace. Well, we must just try so far as it lies in us. I cannot say that I admire the chief's conduct. He is not straight, and the only thing that will keep him straight will be to convince him that the white man is not going to give everything and get nothing. He has been so accustomed for years and years to people coming in making him large presents and getting concessions in return, but these concessions have remained a dead letter. But this won't do with the Chartered Company. They mean business, and if they do not get what he has promised they will want to know the reason why. So it is to be hoped, and the hope has got stronger this last week or two, that he will see the necessity of controlling the unruly element and allowing the Pioneers a free and peaceful passage into Mashonaland. We have rather a dull life. My party are the only white men at the chief's headquarters. We ride over now and then to Bulawayo, about four miles away, where there are still two or three white men; otherwise we scarcely stir out of our camp, which is fenced strongly to keep out loafers and thieves. The Matabele from highest to lowest are beggars and thieves. It is awful to see how they have degenerated in the thirty years I have known them.”

BULAWAYO,
September 28, 1890.

“ Here I am, and likely to be for some considerable time yet. All the exciting passages seem to be over and it is the

dullest monotony. Besides my party there are only nine white men in the country, and of these I hope two or three will soon go. These are some disappointed concession-hunters who have not yet given up trying to get something. They also want to get me removed and a man sent up who will suit their purpose. With this exception everything is as still as possible. The chief seems to have bowed to the inevitable, and is seeking to reconcile himself as best he may to the actual presence in the heart of Mashonaland of four hundred white men. Such a result without a shot being fired would have seemed fabulous two years ago. It would seem as if the good providence of God were opening up the country south of the Zambezi by an irresistible movement. I do not like the ways of some of the more prominent men who figure in the Chartered Company, but the work seems to be of God all the same. The railway is now up to Vryburg, and the telegraph will be at Palapye some time in October !”

BULAWAYO,
November 23, 1890.

“ We are back at Bulawayo. I was sorry to leave our last camp ; it was a good site and we had made ourselves fairly comfortable. I have to follow the chief round whatever his wanderings ; he may not go far from this now for a month or two, in which case I may hold on here and ride over to him day by day. He is busy ‘ making rain,’ and the rain does not seem in a hurry to come. He has some foreign doctors and they are hard at it. This is one of the less detestable superstitions, for it is only silly, but the miserable curse of supposed witchcraft is strong.

Every week we hear of someone being done to death ; the heathenism of these people seems to be hopelessly rampant, and not likely to be overcome till the whole affair is broken up.

I am quite a stickler for the Matabele having fair play and not being put upon by us, but I shall not be sorry to see the crash come, as come it must in some form or other, for it will mean the emancipation of an immense number of alien serfs who live a life of cruel fear and subjection. Probably the Mashonas will put out their horns when they find the white man has come to stay, and the raiders, who annually visit them to make a haul of their children and

whatever little of value they have left, will get it hot next winter, and then the trouble will begin."

August 6, 1891.

"I am here—that is about all I can say—for we jog on the same monotonous way; how much longer I am to be tied by the leg here it is impossible to say. There is always some little reason for my holding on. In a way there is a slight improvement. My chief difficulty has been with various persons who, in their opposition to the Chartered Company, have found it necessary to undermine me too as the Government representative. I have seen the various missionaries lately¹; I cannot think why they stop here. It would be better if they all told the chief that it was no use their doing so. I have lately succeeded in getting the white men together on Sunday mornings, and sometimes one of the missionaries comes over, and on intermediate Sundays I have a Bible reading. It is better than nothing. The moral condition is deplorable. Drunkenness is here regarded as a rather commendable frolic, so long as a man does not get the horrors; outside of the Government camp and the mission stations there is scarcely a man who has not one native concubine at least."

BULAWAYO,

September 27, 1891.

"We have had some trying work here lately, but I hope we shall get through it quietly and keep things in a state of peace. My position is not pleasant—but neither is yours, and we have each our own work to do in different ways—'Our rest must be no rest below.' I would not mind so much if my troubles were only here, but the big folks are so vacillating. I cannot count on their steady support. I fear His Excellency is influenced by the Company crowd and his judgment is obfuscated. It is a good maxim in dealing with natives: be very slow to promise and never threaten, but once having taken a forward step, to stick to it like wax and let nothing but overpowering pressure make you go back.

Then they are not satisfied with a report I have made on

¹ These had by this time returned after their departure when hostilities seemed imminent.—AUTHOR.

the disputed territory (between Lobengula and Khama). They praise it enough as clear and all that, but they send it back on one point, and I am driven to the conclusion that they want me to alter it to meet the views of the amalgamation of Companies—some of whom have been trying to jockey Khama out of some rights. I cannot do it even if they sack me for it. They must find tools for such work elsewhere.”

Moffat's long dreary sojourn in Matabeleland at length came to an end ; on December 1st, 1891, he started for Cape Town, and the following letter was written on his way out :

'NKWEZI RIVER,
December 6, 1891.

“ I am really off, but we do not get on quite as fast as I could wish ; the rains have commenced, and the roads are not such as we can travel over in the dark. We are spending Sunday in a ‘ poort ’ which is really the entrance to the Makalaka Hills, and we have now comparatively open country before us. We are about 130 miles from Palapye, where wagon travelling happily now ceases, and we get the post-cart to Vryburg, which is now the railway terminus.

I am going to Cape Town to see the High Commissioner and possibly to get leave of absence for a time, though I am beginning to forget what leave of absence is like. The tranquillity of Matabeleland is something marvellous. We never hoped for this. It is God's doing and not man's, for I cannot tell how it has come about. All events in the last five years have been steadily tending to the peaceful opening up and development of the interior in a way which points to one Sovereign guiding hand. So far as man is concerned there have been blunders enough to wreck the whole scheme, and there has been evil disposition too ; that is, a great desire to precipitate events and to bring on a short but violent solution of difficulties.

I may not live to see it, but I like to dwell in imagination on the picture of all Africa south of the Zambezi under orderly rule and justice ; no more raiding and inter-tribal quarrels, and the desert place blossoming like the rose.

Here on this very spot where we are encamped, twenty-eight years ago there were native cornlands and crowds of

people. To-day it is a wilderness and one has to look long for any trace of man. And yet it is the richest grazing veldt, and there are hundreds of miles of it. There is ample room for myriads of white people in this country without displacing a single native. I know this is theoretical, for in practice the native does get displaced, but it is not because there is no room for both; the evil comes out of the selfish heart of man."

The ever-advancing railway and the post-cart, which always acts as its temporary substitute, were together rapidly reducing the time formerly occupied by a journey from the interior, and it must have seemed almost incredible to Moffat to find himself on December 23, twenty-three days after leaving Lobengula's kraal, at Cape Town. His wife was now living there, and though the family circle had become sadly reduced, he appreciated the happy reunion, for it was long since he had spent a Christmas with any of his own kith and kin.

In January, after accompanying the Governor to Vryburg, where a conference was held on Protectorate affairs, he was granted a well-earned holiday.

On April 1 he left Cape Town to return once more to Matabeleland, but this time only on a flying visit. The Government had decided, disastrously as it turned out, to withdraw its Resident, and it was to inform Lobengula of the fact and in order to settle one or two minor points that Moffat paid him this last visit. It had been arranged that, having done this, he should take up his long-deferred post as Assistant Commissioner for the Protectorate, residing at Palapye, Khama's town.

The following letter must have been among the last that he ever wrote from Matabeleland :

BULAWAYO,
May 29, 1892.

"I am back at the old place, but this time only on a short visit; in fact I am hoping to get away at the end of the week, on my return to Palapye, which is to be my headquarters in future. The Government have promised to build me a good house there, but my faith is not strong enough to see your mother established there. Still,

harder things have happened. Much as I long for home life again, I should be sorry to relinquish work in the interior, which seems to be a real duty, and your mother would not wish me to do so either. I should not be so glad to get away from this place but for the feeling of utter uselessness. If I could do any good from a missionary point of view it would be some consolation, apart from the political work. In this latter I believe I have been of some use, but there is little left to be done in that line; we must leave some political problems to work themselves out in Matabeleland itself without our interference: possibly this may prepare the way for the gospel message which has so far been proclaimed in vain. There is a process of deterioration and of, I think, disintegration going on: it is possible, though perhaps not probable, that there will be an explosion one of these days, breaking up the whole affair; but, even if not, the slower process is gradually at work. I think the chief is positively relieved to hear that I am going to live at Palapye. It rids him of a lurking fear that I was being forced upon him as a British Resident, in which capacity I should eventually engross his power and supersede his chieftainship. Of course these ideas have not been evolved out of his own brain. They have come from white men and have served their purpose, which was to make a difficulty at a particular juncture. We part good friends enough, and I may have to come very occasionally to see him when there is anything to the fore."

On June 1, 1892, Moffat said good-bye for the last time to Lobengula. Little did the latter realise that on that day his doom was sealed, and that within two years he would die a broken-hearted fugitive. Whether Moffat's presence in Matabeleland would have prevented the final catastrophe it is impossible to say, but had he been in Bulawayo at the time of the Victoria incident, the Governor and the Chartered Company's officials in Cape Town would at any rate have received truthful accounts of what was happening at Lobengula's headquarters, and it would have been impossible for them to precipitate at this juncture a conflict for which on the actual facts there was no real justification.

In the hour of his extremity Lobengula would send one last despairing appeal to his friend, the son of Umshete;

but alas ! when that time came, that trusted adviser could only stand by in dumb agony and watch an irresistible tide, over which he had no longer the shadow of control, sweeping away Lobengula, and with him the pride and might of the Matabele nation.

CHAPTER XXII

POLITICAL WORK IN MATABELELAND

FOR a book of this kind a passing reference to Moffat's political work in Matabeleland might have been deemed sufficient, but unfortunately something more seems unavoidable, for his conduct and good faith in dealing with Lobengula have been most unjustly called in question. Notably is this the case in a volume recently published, wherein its author with obvious bias has done his best, or perhaps it should be said his worst, to blacken the reputation of all those who represented Great Britain during the period of which he writes.

Moffat's life and character need no apologia, but in the interests of historical accuracy, it is only just that the truth should be told about certain transactions with which he was more or less associated.

THE TREATY WITH LOBENGULA, FEBRUARY 1888.

In 1887, when Moffat started on his first official visit to Matabeleland, the outlook in the north was unsatisfactory, not to say critical. Germany, already established on the west, had begun to display an increasing and suspicious interest in the affairs of the Sub-continent, while the Transvaal Republic, suddenly enriched by the discovery of the Rand goldfields, had embarked upon that policy of pin-pricks and aggression that was to lead to its inevitable sequel at Vereeniging. Instead of minding her own business and putting her own house in order, she began to sigh for fresh fields to conquer, moved no doubt in part by the stirrings of newly-acquired power and importance, but mainly, as it seemed, by a crass desire to irritate and thwart Great Britain. It would have been folly for the latter, as Paramount Power in South Africa, to allow a

Government which made no secret of its contemptuous hostility to join hands with the Teuton in encircling her own domains, even if it had been possible for her to stand idly by while the Boers re-enacted the old story in as yet untouched native territory.

This was obvious enough to the men on the spot, but as usual the British Government pursued a policy of shilly-shally, which not only courted disaster, but, as savouring of a dog-in-the-manger attitude, gave her rivals some legitimate cause for complaint.

The aggressive policy of the Transvaal, however, eventually forced Great Britain's hand and prompted the dispatch of Moffat to Matabeleland; but the vagueness of his instructions forms painful reading, showing as it does how little the Home Government had grasped the seriousness of the position. His orders were negative rather than positive; while they told him what he should not do, they only hinted diplomatically at what he might or should do. On the face of it, this appeared to leave him much scope for the exercise of his own judgment; but unfortunately he could never rely on the steady support of his superiors, and it was one of the tragedies of his life in Matabeleland that he constantly had to see his efforts being wasted, and things being muddled in consequence of ignorance, ineptitude, or evil intent on the part of those whose orders he had to carry out.

It had been reported that an emissary of the Transvaal Government, one Grobler by name, had concluded a treaty with Lobengula, which virtually placed his country under the protection of the Republic, and the appointment of Grobler as consul gave colour to the story. Moffat's first business, therefore, on reaching Matabeleland, was to discover how far Lobengula had committed himself with the Transvaal, but unfortunately there was no documentary evidence available, and he had to rely for the most part on the statements of Lobengula, an adept in the art of subterfuge, whose faculty for deceit was only equalled by that of many Europeans in his country. In this connection it is mournful to reflect that on more than one occasion he remarked to Moffat, "I never knew how men could lie until I had to do with white men"; and if in treating with them he adopted similar tactics, he could always claim that he did but follow their example.

In such an atmosphere of all-pervading mendacity to sift the true from the false was no easy matter. In his interviews with Moffat, Lobengula laughed at the suggestion that he had given his country to the protection of the Boers, and those who are acquainted with the mutual antagonism that has always existed between the latter and the natives will be tempted to share his merriment. He admitted having had dealings with Grobler, but stated that all that had passed between them were some negotiations for the renewal of an old and practically obsolete treaty of amity, which had been made by the Boers with his father, Mosilikatze, many years before.

Treaties in which the signature of one of the parties concerned consists only of "his mark" depend for their value upon the personality and reputation of the person, or persons, on the other side who are aware of the contents of the document that is being executed. Whatever may have been the origin of the much-vaunted Grobler treaty, Moffat soon convinced himself that its high-sounding phrases did not in any way tally with Lobengula's intentions; and it may be pointed out that this is confirmed by the latter's subsequent treatment of Grobler, who in the following year paid him his first visit in his capacity as consul.

Having studied the situation, Moffat satisfied himself that the door was still open for independent action on the part of his own Government, but in undertaking it he had no desire personally to enter into direct competition with the Transvaal Government, as is shown by the following extract from a letter:

"It is to be regretted that the Transvaal Government and ourselves should be brought into rivalry. I have always avoided anything that would lead the chief's mind in that direction, but I fear that Lobengula will now amuse himself by pitting Transvaal and British against each other. It is true that all along such Boer visitors as he has had have not scrupled to take the position of antagonism against our Government, but I have endeavoured to neutralise this by urging the chief to discriminate between such individuals and the responsible Government of the Transvaal. I have hoped that the two

Governments might have been able to maintain an honourable understanding with each other, but it is to be feared that the President is being led to adopt a course not far short of hostility to us."

Another possibility that Moffat had to face added to his difficulties; for any line of action that he might follow ran the risk of being repudiated by the Home Government. Moreover, Lobengula showed little inclination to enter into negotiations, and Moffat, who came more or less with empty hands as compared with his political and commercial rivals,¹ stood at a disadvantage, for Lobengula had become accustomed to expect immediate and tangible benefits in return for any favours that he might grant. He, however, waited on patiently, and in February 1888 succeeded in getting Lobengula to sign what is known as the "Moffat Treaty."

Shortly after Moffat's departure Consul Grobler turned up on the scene, and the news of the former's success seems to have caused him much chagrin, which was intensified by Lobengula's rather cool reception of him. The latter apparently now heard for the first time that, in accordance with the treaty between him and the Transvaal, an emissary of the Republic would in future reside in the country. Far from displaying any pleasure at the prospect, Lobengula declined the honour. He pointed out to Grobler that, as the original treaty made by his father had not involved his having a Boer resident, so now he saw no need nor reason for such an arrangement, and he requested him to go.

The crestfallen Grobler took the hint and went, ostensibly to fetch his wife, and as it happened never returned. On his way out he received a gunshot wound during a fracas with some of Khama's people, and died from its

¹ During the two months he was at Lobengula's headquarters in 1888, Moffat learnt that "at least £600 sterling had been paid by various persons seeking to advance their claims, besides presents of valuable horses and guns from the Transvaal Government, representing an outlay of at least £1,000."

Again, writing in August 1889, he remarks: "There is a perfect avalanche of present-giving. Every Dick, Tom, and Harry who goes to Maund's Camp comes away more or less clothed, if not in his right mind—horses and saddles are given to indunas, full suits to the next rank, cloth and beads galore to the plebs." No wonder that Lobengula once asked Moffat why people with so much money wanted to come to this country to seek gold!—AUTHOR.

² Vide Appendix.

effects. The Transvaal Government, much mortified, at once set to work to discredit Moffat by casting doubts upon the validity of his treaty with Lobengula, which they refused to recognise. A sworn report was produced, which stated that Lobengula, in an interview with Grobler and others, had denied having signed any treaty with Moffat, whom he accused of lying. Evidence of this kind can be taken for what it is worth, but even were it unimpeachable it would prove nothing. The matter would resolve itself into one man's word against another's, that of a savage against that of a civilised European of unquestioned integrity. To put it on no higher ground than probability, can there be any reasonable doubt which of the two is more worthy of credence?

Moreover, people who habitually decry the value of native evidence have no right to fall back upon it when it suits their convenience. Fortunately the British Government had by this time decided upon a definite policy and refused to be browbeaten. It declined to enter into what it very rightly considered was a futile and uncalled-for discussion concerning the validity of Moffat's treaty, and the Transvaal wisely elected to retire from the contest, so that with Grobler's death both his treaty and the consulship lapsed.

That Moffat should have deliberately forged or tampered with such a document as that which contained his treaty is unthinkable to those who knew him, and to most people the mere supposition is so absurd as hardly to merit attention.

Indeed, it would almost seem unnecessary to labour the point, but it is worth recalling that for the next four years Moffat lived in close association with Lobengula, and never once did the latter charge him with any deception in the affair of the treaty. Had Lobengula really believed what he was alleged to have said about Moffat he would not have continued on friendly terms with him, and it is more than probable he would have forbidden him to remain in the country.

But, after all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the fact remains that from this time onward Lobengula kept faith with the British Government in accordance with the treaty that he had signed. It was an instrument which paved the way for all that was to follow, and

there is little doubt that, had Moffat been able to foresee the future, no power could have persuaded him to sign what proved in other hands to be the death-knell of Lobengularung to the tune of treachery and deceit. No one desired more strongly than he the breaking-up of this cruel tyranny, but it was his hope that this would be brought about, if not peacefully, at any rate with clean hands so far as his own Government was concerned. How keenly he felt even the possibility of being misjudged by the natives is shown by the following extract from a letter to his sister, written in 1889, when the question of his remaining in Matabeleland had been proposed :

“It seems as though I am to become permanently connected with Matabeleland. I only want to know if it is a duty and I will submit—dreadful as the prospect is. I have not brought myself to consent yet. It means a much longer separation from all I hold dear in this world, and it means probable discredit and misunderstanding in the minds of the natives, for when the conflict and collision, humanly speaking inevitable, come they will look upon me as their betrayer ; not justly, but they cannot be made to understand, and to be misunderstood by them would be a grievous wound to my spirit ; worse than death, and death (itself no improbable contingency) would be more acceptable. However, I am prepared, but I want God to show me the way without doubt.”

Regarded in itself, his treaty with Lobengula represented a piece of statesmanship upon which he might well have looked back with pardonable pride and satisfaction, but in the light of subsequent events it remained to him a mixed and painful memory.

With it the history of Rhodesia begins, for without it the Chartered Company might never have come into existence, and in a sense, therefore, it may be said to have saved Matabeleland and Mashonaland for the empire.

On the firm foundation that he laid has been raised, it is true, a fair and goodly edifice, but the lower courses of its walls are stained with indelible marks that Time's hand can never erase. In the last act of the tragedy of 1893 it added not a little to Moffat's horror of the whole proceeding to reflect that it was that same treaty, signed and sealed

by himself, that Lobengula respected and trusted in to the very end—but all in vain !

THE RUDD CONCESSION AND THE CHARTERED COMPANY

Moffat's official position unavoidably brought him into relation with the Chartered Company in its early days, but much misconception exists about his general attitude towards it. That he rather welcomed its inception than otherwise, and that at first he wished it well, cannot be denied, but is easily explainable.

At the time when the original syndicate began its operations, matters in Matabeleland were heading straight towards chaos, for, like bees round a comb, concession-hunters of diverse tribes and tongues were swarming into the country all intent on grabbing what they could in what was regarded as the coming El Dorado. Had things been left to take their own course, a similar state of affairs to that which afterwards obtained in Swaziland would have been brought about here. The chief of that country for several years before its annexation scattered concessions broadcast to all and sundry for almost every conceivable form of human activity. It is even reported that one late comer, finding all avenues closed against him, sought and obtained a document that conferred upon him the exclusive right to control anything and everything not yet included in any previous concession. All these conflicting claims had to be adjudicated and settled before the Government could take any steps to establish a settled administration, and the process involved an enormous amount of time, energy, and expense. Such was the condition into which Matabeleland was rapidly drifting when the famous Rudd Syndicate, which later became the Chartered Company, appeared on the scene in 1888. Up to this time not many of those who had obtained, or were seeking, concessions had the slightest intention of making any practical use of them ; indeed some had not the means even if they had wished to do so. Most of them regarded their rights merely as pawns that were to be exchanged later on for whatever they might bring in the shape of hard cash.

Moreover, the moral tone in Matabeleland could not be classed as high, for there is ever a tendency on the fringes of the Empire for men to throw off the restraints of civil-

isation, and the quest for gold is notorious for its baneful effects on human character. Lobengula himself had all the vices of the savage, and in addition had acquired the taste for the white man's alcohol, so that a case or two of champagne constituted a safe passport to his favour; under its mellowing influence he became more complaisant, a fact of which the unscrupulous were not slow to take advantage, and it is not surprising, therefore, that his recollections of concessions were sometimes a little mixed.

Moffat saw that the tide of expansion had begun to set strongly to the north, and that in consequence the opening up of Matabeleland could not now be much longer delayed. In these circumstances he recognised, as every sensible man could not fail to do, that it was preferable that its exploitation should be guided by some strong co-ordinating authority rather than that it should be left in the hands of mutually antagonistic interests. If the Government eventually did annex the country, it would be forced to buy out these concession-holders, and many of them were men of unprincipled character who had only obtained these privileges, if not by fraud, at any rate by pandering to Lobengula's vices. It was a welcome relief for him to turn from such men to those who were concerned in the negotiations for the Rudd Concession; with them he found himself dealing with honourable English gentlemen who sought for rights not for the sake of levying a kind of blackmail upon any future Government, but with the object of developing the country themselves. Unlike most of their predecessors and rivals, they had the necessary capital and influence behind them, and they were in a position to carry into effect any obligations that they might contract.

On their first visit to Matabeleland these gentlemen brought with them personal letters of introduction to Moffat, and in a private capacity he readily placed himself at their disposal, but from a business point of view he kept religiously aloof from them. Concerning this he writes:

"My instructions were to introduce them to the king with a favourable recommendation, and then to leave them to work out things for themselves."

He neither sought, nor wished to know, their exact aims or plans, contenting himself with acting the part of a disinterested spectator. Their wonderful success (due, of course, to the long purse on which they could

draw), coupled with the fact that he was personally on more friendly terms with this party than with other less respectable concession-hunters, gave some colour to the suspicion that he had used his influence on their behalf. This, though pure fiction, served as a handle for disappointed rivals who assiduously endeavoured to damage him in Lobengula's eyes by asserting that he was only a disguised member of the Rudd group. Later when the Chartered Company had come into being, and when Lobengula had repented of his bargain, this lie brought much undeserved odium upon him. It may be mentioned as a matter of fact that Moffat received specific instructions from his official superiors to the effect that he was in no way to identify himself with the Company or its interests.

Moved apparently by a similar spirit to that exhibited by the "mean whites" in Matabeleland, and for analogous reasons, the author of the book already referred to flings the same accusation, professing to believe that Moffat used his official position to engineer a concession for certain privileged people. Perhaps it is superfluous to say that nothing could be more fantastic. He bases his opinion on inferences, but these are ever double-edged tools.

Nemesis awaits those who recklessly deal in unjustifiable insinuations, which not infrequently only serve to lay bare the workings of the mind from which they emanate, and, as the political proclivities of the author in question are well known, the tenor of his lucubrations need cause no surprise.

Moffat was so little concerned with the Rudd concession that he left Bulawayo, on his way south, before it had been obtained, and while the negotiations were still proceeding; of its actual provisions he knew nothing until it was an accomplished fact, and he accepted its genuineness solely for the reason that it had been attested by the Rev. Charles Helm, who acted as interpreter, and in his integrity he placed implicit trust.

It must always be remembered, in judging of Moffat's relations with the Chartered Company, that in those early days its promoters and later its officials appeared zealously to seek peace, and their methods did not raise any suspicions in his mind. Whether or not their conduct merely represented a piece of organised hypocrisy it is useless, even if it were fair, to speculate upon. Possibly the acquisition of power in later days bred the desire to use it, or it may

have been that, early expectations having failed to materialise, the Company was driven by force of circumstances and the claims of self-preservation to adopt other methods, but certain it is that in the beginning Moffat and its promoters had many aims in common. The actual motives at work may have differed, but both desired that the blessings of peace and civilisation should be brought to Matabeleland, and it seemed at first that both were in agreement in regard to the general principles by which this was to be effected. The Company may have been trimming its sails to a favouring wind, but the fact that Cecil Rhodes placed so high an estimate on Moffat's presence and influence in Matabeleland is proof enough that he had at this stage no aggressive designs, though the time was to come when Moffat would regard his actions with the utmost abhorrence.

The most ardent admirer of Cecil Rhodes must admit that he was not fastidious in the matter of selecting the means to gain his ends; no doubt he preferred the straight path, but if the crooked one led more quickly and more surely to his goal, no scruples hampered him in its choice, provided the ultimate result was in his opinion beneficial, and this not necessarily in a selfish direction.

Neither now nor ever did Moffat bow the knee before the wealth and power of Cecil Rhodes, but the following letter shows how fairly he could write of one for whom he had at best a qualified admiration :

PALAPYE,
March 2, 1890.

" You seem to be in somewhat of a mist about the S.A. Company. There are strong prejudices, evidently, in the case of Mr. Cecil Rhodes, who after all is not the Company, though he may be the most active member of the Directorate. It is not my business to defend him, or the Company. As to his character, it may be best learnt in its bearing upon natives in the history of the De Beers' Mining Company. If the philanthropists of Exeter Hall and the A.P.S.¹

¹ It is perhaps almost unnecessary to point out that with the general aims of the Aborigines Protection Society Moffat was in full sympathy, but he more than once had to deplore the fact that its executive could allow their enthusiasm to overreach itself, with the result that in their ignorant zeal they sometimes did more harm than good. A painful example of this occurred while Moffat was in Matabeleland.

The A.P.S. quite gratuitously took upon themselves to write a letter to Lobengula, tendering certain advice, which they forwarded by the hands

had half as much good to show for any of their undertakings as the De Beers, there would be no holding them; and this good in the fighting of the liquor interest and the establishment of the Compound System is the work mainly of Rhodes. I do not pretend that his motives have been philanthropic. He is a man of the world and has the sense (not common in the world, as supposed) to see that justice and good treatment of natives pays best. As to the Company, in its own interest, as a matter of economy, it would rather work peaceably with the Matabele, and I with my known views would scarcely have been urged at the instance of the Company's representative to accept the post of Government Representative, to watch and check the Company's proceedings if the buccaneering element were predominant. It is there, no doubt, and I have had to fight it already in what might be an unexpected quarter, if all were known, and in fighting it I have the personal sympathy of the men whom Mr. Rhodes has selected as fittest to do his work in Matabeleland."

As is indicated by this letter, the rift between himself and the Company, which later would widen into a gulf poles asunder, began early; it soon became apparent how little he really had in common with those who were directing its operations, for their thoughts were not his thoughts nor their ways his ways. Inevitably there followed conflict. Rhodes had here to deal with one whom he could not bend to his will.

It was an unequal, hopeless fight when the Company, having consolidated its position, began to show the iron hand that had hitherto been concealed by the velvet glove. Moffat's presence in Matabeleland then became a hindrance rather than a help, and the Government, subservient to the masterful spirit of Rhodes, withdrew its representative from Matabeleland—leaving Lobengula free, without a guiding friendly hand, to rush to his doom.

of the indunas who had been taken to England by a rival syndicate, who at that time were trying to upset the Rudd concession. The construction put upon the contents of this letter by Lobengula and his indunas was, in Moffat's own opinion, the main cause of a terrible tragedy, by which an influential induna with all his family was massacred, on the ground that he had favoured the granting of the Rudd concession. At the time Moffat wrote to a friend in England beseeching him to impress upon the A.P.S. that, before meddling with Matabeleland affairs, it would be as well that they should send out an agent to investigate into the true state of affairs on the spot.

Though Moffat's work paved the way for that which followed, it were the height of injustice to charge him with complicity in any of the dubious actions of the Chartered Company, and the fact that at the start he wished it success lends no support to the suggestion that he approved of its later aims and methods. He had ploughed, sowed, and watered, but before the harvest had whitened others entered in, not to reap but to burn; though it may be admitted that they did so in order to plant with other seed. Even so, in their ruthless haste they destroyed much of value, including that which, though immaterial, was of priceless worth—the trustful faith of a savage in the word of an Englishman.

THE LIPPERT CONCESSION

From its very beginnings many difficulties confronted the Chartered Company, and that it should have weathered the storm is evidence enough of the skill and determination of its promoters, guided as they were by the genius of Cecil Rhodes. Added to all else it had numerous rivals and enemies who had to be cajoled into submission or crushed before any headway could be made.

It would be an astounding and, it must be confessed, a sordid story that the historian would have to unfold if he were to treat in detail of all the plots and counter-plots, the petty negotiations and transactions that consumed its energies before the immediate obstacles to progress could be cleared away.

Having a long purse, it could deal without much difficulty with those who sought compensation for vested rights in Matabeleland, though in some cases the price paid was extortionate in comparison with what the owners had given for them; but eventually it bought out, and thus silenced a certain number.

But with those who had nothing to sell it was a different matter. These, mostly disappointed rivals and penniless adventurers, were not only elusive but the most mischievous; having nothing further to gain or lose, they were careless what evil they wrought so long as it hampered or ruined those who had been more successful than themselves.

No lie was too flagrant, no misrepresentation too fantastic

provided it would serve its purpose, to stultify the policy of the Government or the Company or to discredit their officials in the eyes of the Matabele.

A favourite device consisted in the insertion of some wildly impossible story in one of the Colonial or English papers, some of which, to suit their own ends, lent themselves knowingly or credulously to these tactics. These scraps of journalistic chaff would be retailed by their originators into the willing but unsophisticated ears of Lobengula as solemn facts vouched for by the printed page, and it speaks volumes for Moffat's influence that peace was preserved.

If the whole story as revealed in his letters could be given, its readers would find it difficult to know at what to wonder most--the depth of meanness and deceit of which men can be capable, or the calm patience and steadfast courage of him who had to bear the brunt of the storm.

As illustrating the atmosphere in which Moffat had to live and work, the following letter addressed to the Administrator, Sir Sidney Shippard, is illuminating :

MUVUTJA, MATABELELAND,
May 1, 1889.

“MY DEAR SIR,

I arrived on Monday evening and saw the chief at once. My reception was chilling, not to say uncourteous. I went again yesterday morning. He was full of business and asked me to wait. I am still doing so. . . . I find that I am represented to the chief as an envoy of the Cape Government as opposed to that of the Queen, of which latter the chief has sent his messengers. This, of course, is the handiwork of Mr. Maund, and we may know what to expect on his return with his messengers, unless some very remarkable change takes place in the meanwhile. An additional element has been introduced. It is stated to the chief that the Transvaal Government are acting in collusion and the Rhodes syndicate is in the swim, being a Cape Government affair, and that the Home Government is opposed to the syndicate.

Ideas of this kind have taken fast hold of the minds of the anti-Rhodes party here, and are by them industriously hammered into the chief. The length to which party bitterness has gone is almost too much for belief. When our

estimable friend Maguire (one of the Rudd party) is charged secretly with having poisoned the water and with riding about at night on a hyæna, we can but sit in silent admiration of the strength of some men's imagination. There is a comic side to this business, and there is also a tragical element. Such ideas promulgated in a country like this are little short of incitements to murder. I shall do my best, but I wish you to know that the odds are against me. I believe the chief is manageable by reason and honesty, but there are forces behind him which, once set in motion, he cannot control, and there are white men here unscrupulous enough to play on popular passions, not reflecting that the flood which swept away their antagonists would sweep them away too.

I am, etc.,
J. S. MOFFAT."

In this seething cauldron of conflicting passions Moffat stood like a sea-girt rock against which the waves beat in vain, but how fierce the struggle he endured none will ever know.¹ There is no doubt that, in spite of insidious backbiting and venomous falsehoods, Lobengula recognised that with him he was dealing with one who stood out and above the warring factions, a man seeking not gold, but only opportunity to serve his Sovereign loyally and honourably, just as Lobengula would have expected his own indunas to serve himself. Unfortunately the behaviour of those whom he represented added not a little to his perplexities. The Chartered Company soon began to display what he regarded as the cloven hoof indicative of a lower standard than he had looked for, and the Governor, hypnotised, as it seemed, by Rhodes, ceased to be much more than his weak echo. The Government policy became halting and nerveless, hectoring when diplomacy was needed, complacent and yielding when sterner measures were called for, a state of things most galling to one like Moffat, whose knowledge of native character was unsurpassed.

¹ The following extract from a letter written by Mr. "Matabele" Wilson, after Moffat's death, indicates how the character of the latter impressed some of his contemporaries in Matabeleland:

"He was a grand old man, and left the world much better for his presence here. Mammon could not buy him; earthquakes could not shift him from his convictions, or what he thought was right. We all honoured him in those early days up here. May his soul have a soft resting-place in the realms above."

Moreover, having acquired the reputation of being well disposed to the Company, and being on the spot, he had to bear the full brunt of the animosity of its enemies. This in itself he could treat with deserved contempt, but it was nauseating for a man of his ideals to be brought into daily and intimate relation with men whose whole outlook on life differed entirely from his own. Not only so, but he frequently found himself mixed up with transactions that did violence to his keen sense of honour, in circumstances that made it appear as though he were aiding and abetting them. No more illuminating example of this can be found than that of the notorious Lippert Concession, about which a good deal of highfalutin nonsense has been talked, and it is desirable, if for no other reason than to correct the odious insinuations that have been cast at Moffat in this matter, to deal with it in some detail.

As already has been suggested, many of the concessions obtained from Lobengula were of dubious validity; there is no doubt some were deliberate forgeries with which the holders levied blackmail on the Company. To save time and trouble these shady documents were accepted and bought at their face value without question, and eventually the Company had possessed itself of all the other white men's interests in the country with the exception of those of one group, which stood out for extravagant terms. This group was headed by a German named Lippert, whose agent, — — —, an Englishman, had been for some time hanging about Matabeleland trying to get something, but with no success. He was in consequence a bitter opponent of the Chartered Company and the cause of much trouble, so that Moffat speaks of him in one place as one who had been "a thorn in his side." In 1891 he produced a document which purported to be a concession granted by Lobengula for land rights in Mashonaland, and his principals endeavoured to palm this off on Rhodes at a high figure. The latter was willing enough to come to terms, but soon satisfied himself that the document would not stand inspection. Eventually, however, he told the would-be vendors that, if they could obtain a real grant for land in Mashonaland (the Company only having mineral rights), he would be prepared to buy it of them. By accepting these terms the supposed concession-holders practically confessed that this document was worthless;

nevertheless Lippert in person was allowed to proceed to Matabeleland in quest of that which he professed to have already!

His endeavours were not at first successful, and for a time it seemed that there was little chance of his getting anything; various other people began to work against him, and in a very short while the reign of intrigue and trickery was again in full swing.

But another complication had to be reckoned with. The Lippert group had hitherto been fighting the Chartered Company, and it would have mystified Lobengula and probably have nullified their efforts had they confessed that they were now working in concert with their old enemies, especially as Lobengula, having repented too late of his bargain with the Chartered Company, would have shied at the idea of conferring any further privileges upon it.

The conspirators, if so we may call them, had agreed that until the concession had been obtained nothing need be said about its ultimate destination. To the purist, of course, such a procedure would be open to question, though it is one that probably thousands daily adopt who regard themselves as everything that is honourable. It has a flavour of the Stock Exchange that does not appeal to all, but if those who hold up their hands in real or affected horror at the transaction have never committed any worse infraction of the moral law they are to be congratulated.

Needless to say, to Moffat the whole thing was repugnant in the extreme, and it is a strange fate that should have implicated his name in such a sorry business. The first definite intimation of it that he received was contained in the following letter, from which he noted with regret, though not altogether with surprise, that the Governor had completely succumbed to the materialistic influences of Rhodes and his colleagues:

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, CAPE TOWN,
September 12, 1891.

“Confidential.”

MY DEAR MR. MOFFAT,

Mr. Rudd on behalf of the Company has been negotiating with Lippert with a view to the acquisition of the alleged concessions, provided they are admitted by Lobengula and approved by the Secretary of State.

An understanding on this basis has been arrived at on the subject; I apprehend the acceptance by Lobengula of the money payments are sufficient proof as to the validity of the Concession.

The position, therefore, stands as follows—Messrs. Lippert, ———, and Boyle, and I presume Riley, are nominally on behalf of themselves, but really on behalf of the Company, to obtain the ratification by Lobengula of the concession they claim to have acquired—the first three sign bonds not to disturb the peace of the country—and on their signing this undertaking they receive a permit to proceed to Bulawayo.

I presume that it is essential that Lobengula should deal with them, and they with him, on their own account, and that it will be undesirable the fact of any agreement between Mr. Lippert, etc., should become known until after the ratification of the concession by Lobengula—as it is likely the king has granted the concession under the impression he is strengthening a corporation hostile to the Company, and thus dividing the white men amongst themselves—and if he knew the concession had been bought by the Company, he might possibly refuse to ratify it. Your attitude, therefore, towards Messrs. Lippert and ——— should not change too abruptly, though if consulted by the king you might profess indifference on the subject; but on this as on all other points connected with this incident I must trust largely to your discretion, and leave you to be guided by circumstances. You must, however, bear in mind you must acquire sufficient evidence that will enable you to speak positively on the ratification of the concession by the king. The arrangement of which I have informed you appears to be the best solution of a difficult position, for it will enable the Chartered Company to make some land settlements before next trekking season, which [*sic*] agitation would certainly have been renewed had no arrangements been arrived at with the concessionaires.

Yours very truly,
HENRY B. LOCH."

The Rev. J. S. Moffat, C.M.G.

Prior to the receipt of this letter Moffat had received a veiled hint of what was contemplated. He had already

satisfied himself that the supposed concession was a worthless instrument, and he had written to the Governor suggesting that, instead of the Chartered Company's buying such a dubious concession, it would be far wiser for them to make an attempt to procure one for themselves.

On August 26 he wrote to the Governor :

“ I am satisfied that the chief had no idea of the extent of the powers that he was granting —. From some remarks which came out in the meeting on the 12th it was evident to me that the leading idea of the agreement was that — was to go in and in some way fight against the Rudd concession. Mr. Rhodes' idea of sending Colenbrander to conduct a negotiation on the land question is good. He is qualified in the language, is quick-witted and is liked by the chief.

Should he succeed it would be safer than trying to buy a concession which is of a suspicious character, and it would also avoid the palpable immorality which would be involved in — getting (if he does get it) such a thing on behalf of the chief against the Chartered Company and then going and selling it to that very Company.”

His feelings on receiving the Governor's letter, and his subsequent connection with the whole business, are shown by the following series of extracts from his letters dealing with the subject. It will be seen that he did not conceal his views, but his voice was as that of one crying in the wilderness :

*To His Excellency Sir H. B. Loch, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., etc.,
Governor and High Commissioner.*

BULAWAYO,
October 7, 1891.

“ Your letter of the 12th tells me of the fact that an arrangement has been come to between Rudd and Lippert, and that Lippert and his party are to be allowed to come in, having signed bonds to do nothing to disturb the peace of the country. I am thankful that Your Excellency assigns to me a quite limited course of action ; nothing more than to satisfy myself about the reality of the concession granted by the chief to these people. I hope nothing will occur

to bring me into any closer contact with the proceedings. If I did not feel that the chief is quite as deceitful as those who are going to try conclusions with him, I do not know if I could sit still and let this go on; but as it is only . . . on both sides, I can sit still and hope I shall not be brought into any partnership with either side. I regret that another course was not pursued—that Mr. Rhodes has not treated the alleged concession as it deserved and come to the chief with a fair and open proposal. The chief is reckoning on the antagonism of Lippert and Rhodes, and must before long find that he has been outwitted. The very essence of his policy will be, as it always has been, to play the white men against each other, and any concession will be granted on the understanding that Lippert is fighting Rhodes, and then he will find that he has been deceived. This is not a healthy basis for future operations. . . .”

To Mr. Rhodes

BULAWAYO,

October 9, 1891.

“I have His Excellency’s instructions about the expected visit of Lippert and —, and I shall carry them out to the letter, viz. to leave L and T a free hand to carry out their negotiations with the chief, simply satisfying myself, for the information of the Government, as to what concession they really obtain.

At the same time I feel bound to tell you that I look on the whole plan as detestable, whether viewed in the light of policy or morality. . . . When Lobengula finds it all out, as he is sure to do sooner or later, what faith will he have in you? I am thankful that my orders do not require me to take part personally in this transaction; it is bad enough to have to be cognisant of it, and I should fail in my duty if I did not tell you what I think of it.”

To His Excellency Sir H. B. Loch, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

BULAWAYO,

October 23, 1891.

“Mr. Lippert arrived two days ago. Mr. — having come previously, they went over yesterday to see the chief, and I believe propounded their scheme. They were requested to return again to-day with me. We

went and spent the forenoon with the chief and three important indunas. As usual there was a great deal of irrelevant discussion, the old tale over again, and I was reproached for not having assisted the chief to repudiate the Rudd Concession. This has become part of the accepted routine in every meeting of the kind.

After spending their brains in a prodigious amount of fencing and subterfuge, they at length gave me an opportunity of saying all I had to say proper to the subject of the hour—which was that Your Excellency, having been guaranteed that Lippert and ——— would do no mischief, had permitted them to come here with liberty to get from the chief what they could in the way of a land concession; that, according to my instructions, I had nothing to do with them or their matters, further than to satisfy myself as to what they actually do obtain from the chief.

I am not aware of the full particulars of what took place yesterday, but from Mr. Lippert's account given me last night I am left to suppose that the (to me) most objectionable feature of his plan of negotiations has been thrown into the background, if not altogether left out—viz. the antagonism to the Chartered Company regarded as an ingredient of value and as an inducement to the Chief to give Lippert what he asks. At all events to-day there was no stress laid upon it. I hope I shall not be further mixed up in the affair beyond learning the exact value of the results obtained by Lippert."

To His Excellency Sir H. B. Loch, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

BULAWAYO,
October 30, 1891.

"Mr. Lippert has not yet succeeded in bringing his negotiations to a successful end. I have been twice, at the chief's request, present while interviews have been going on. The chief has asked me to give him my advice. This is just what I am unable to do. I should have to tell downright falsehoods, or if I told the truth to smash Lippert's case. I have good reason to believe that the chief and the indunas suspect that Lippert and Rhodes are working in concert, and that they are to be deceived in some way. I have had to do what is very hard; to sit by

in silence and to hear things said which are not true. I have confined myself strictly to the line that the Government has given Lippert and — a free hand to receive from the chief whatever he chooses to give them, and that I am to be clearly informed as to what is or is not given. I hoped to have been relieved from the necessity of being present at any of these meetings, but the chief would not go on without me.”

The concession-seekers at length succeeded in obtaining what they wanted, and Moffat reports to the Government as follows :

BULAWAYO,
October 30, 1891.

“I am thankful that Lippert’s negotiations are through so well. With great tact he kept out of my way those features of the business on which I have expressed an adverse opinion to Your Excellency, and any part I have had to take has been such as to cause me no loss of self-respect. I still wish things had come about by a more direct and open road, but this is a matter for Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Lippert to settle with their own consciences.”

In due course Lippert and the Chartered Company concluded their bargain, no doubt to their mutual advantage. What the former received history tells not, but the latter by the deal enormously enhanced its power and practically absorbed Mashonaland.

It is evident that Moffat himself had no part nor lot in the actual transaction. His connection with it resolves itself into this : that, acting as a Government official and under direct orders from his superior officer, he witnessed a compact between two parties whose respective ethical standards left something to be desired. Another point must also be borne in mind. On the face of it there was no reason to suppose that it would make much difference to Lobengula which of the two factions possessed the concession. Had the agreement, which Moffat attested, involved any real harm or injustice to Lobengula, it is certain that, rather than witness it, he would have defied his superiors and have taken the consequences.

In May 1892, when Moffat paid his last visit to

Lobengula, he had to inform him that Lippert had sold his concession to the Chartered Company.

The old chief, blissfully unconscious, as was Moffat, of what this portended in the future, took the matter very casually, as is shown by the following entry in Moffat's diary:

May 23, 1892.—"I told the chief about the amalgamation of the interests of Rhodes and Lippert. He did not seem to care much about it—at all events he kept up an animated conversation with a number of people who came in immediately afterwards."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BECHWANALAND PROTECTORATE, 1892-1895

MOFFAT'S departure from Bulawayo in June 1892 represented in more senses than one a definite parting of the ways. His work in Matabeleland was done, and though he knew it not, the tide of his official career had come to flood; the ebb, undiscernible as yet, had already begun to flow, and in its outrush it would carry away with it some of the old landmarks whose foundations he had loosened, leaving him a discarded, stranded castaway.

Having paid farewell to Lobengula, he turned away for the last time from the "Great Place" and, setting his face southwards, took the well-known road along which he had travelled so often with varying emotions. The clanking wheels of his wagon would measure it again this once, and then no more; when next he passed this way, eleven years later, the railway would carry him, and around the former courts of Lobengula he would find a modern township standing.

This was indeed his last trek; the days of leisurely travel for him were over, for in his subsequent travels through the Protectorate quicker means of transit were available, the postal conveyances or specially provided mule-carts. This change he accepted gladly, for the saving in time was enormous, and he had begun to realise how large a portion of his life had been consumed in the slow-plodding ox-wagon.

He reached his future headquarters, Palapye, on June 14, 1892. This was a comparatively new native town, the residence of the chief Khama, who in 1889 had migrated hither from the old capital in the Shoshong Hills.

The Bechwanaland Protectorate had lately been subdivided, and Mr. Surmon, an old Basutoland friend and colleague, had been appointed Assistant Commissioner for the southern portion, and hence it was only the northern

part, which included Khama's country, that Moffat had now primarily to deal with. On native questions the aims and views of the two Assistant Commissioners coincided, and having much else in common, they were able to work to the end in complete harmony with feelings of mutual respect and esteem.

As compared with his nomadic exile in Matabeleland, life at Palapye offered many advantages. Of journeying, it is true, there was still no end, and writing in November 1892, he speaks of having travelled 2,380 miles within the area of the Protectorate since the previous July. But on the whole it was a more settled existence; he had at any rate a place that he could call his home, even though at first it consisted of nothing more than a native hut; but in other ways his three years at Palapye were a period of storm and stress, differing in kind, but not in degree, from what he had experienced in Matabeleland. His status and duties, of course, had entirely altered; he was no longer a special envoy; his position had lost, therefore, something in dignity, a fact that his reduction of salary by one-third served to accentuate; he had no longer to deal with a savage despot and a truculent people, but with more or less civilised chiefs ruling peaceful tribes. Of these the most important was Khama, whose territory, unfortunately for himself and his people, lay in the direct line of traffic to the north, and the encroachments of the white man threatened to extinguish him as it did Lobengula; in these circumstances it was well for him that he had as his guide and friend one who not only aimed at softening the impact between the old and the new, but who also was ready to fight to the last for justice on behalf of the weaker side.

Unfortunately Moffat's sun was sinking rapidly; his influence now could at best be mainly negative rather than positive, and opportunities for constructive work were denied to him. The Chartered Company gradually but surely was usurping power in Mashonaland and Matabeleland, but the position of Khama's country constituted an obstacle and hampered the vast designs of Rhodes, whose power and influence had become almost supreme in South Africa. Though he was in reality the main antagonist, his attitude set the standard for others, who needed no exemplar, and the current against which Moffat had to strive almost single-handed ran swift and deep; to make

headway was impossible, he had need to be content if he could only yield no ground.

He had reached a stage when, by reason of age, experience, and service, he might justly have looked to be entrusted with wider powers, but he still remained the harassed subordinate, whose sole function it was to carry out the orders of his superiors in rank. This in itself he could have faced with equanimity, but the evil and stupidity in high places that he had to witness and to participate in had begun to jar upon his long-suffering nerves. The conflicts of the last few years had left their mark, and there is recognisable in his letters a note as of weariness and the expression of a desire for rest, for the menace of the years had begun to tell. His faith that the Judge of all the earth would do right still shone clear and strong, but it seemed to him that He, for purposes of His own, was permitting evil designs to flourish, and there assailed him the temptation that to fight against them were in vain. Yet to the end he strove, nor did he quit the field until his enemies confessed their own defeat by removing him to another sphere, where his voice was silenced.

But his difficulties were not only with his official superiors; in other quarters too his conduct of affairs brought him nothing but disrepute, as is illustrated by his treatment of the drink question. Khama had for many years unaided kept his country free from this accursed traffic, and now it appeared as though his efforts were to be nullified by those who had come to "protect" him.

Writing in August 1892 Moffat refers to this subject :

"I find in the Protectorate that it is a regular grapple with the drink-selling interest. I am determined to stand by Khama. He has kept drink out of his country hitherto, and it will be a shame if, now that we in a measure take his affairs into our hands, we allow it to come in. I have refused all applications for licences in the Northern Protectorate—that is in Khama's country—and have made the grog-sellers my enemies in consequence. The officers of the Bechwanaland Police are largely on that side too, and they have a great deal too much to say in the affairs of the Protectorate, and they carry with them Sir Sidney Shippard, and naturally the High Commissioner cannot help being influenced. I am perfectly clear as to my duty even

if I eventually go to the wall in the maintenance of it. So it is not all honey here."

PALAPYE,
October 23, 1892.

"Really, sometimes it is difficult to keep the peace of God in my heart, so harassing are the demands on time and strength—these constant journeys to the Southern Protectorate (during the temporary absence of Mr. Surmon) take it out of me. They mean three days and three nights of continuous post-cart travelling each way, with only such sleep as can be got going along, and post-cart is not even ox-wagon in that respect."

January 1, 1893.

"I cannot hold with much that is being done; there is a policy of fuss and meddlesomeness; but I have to obey orders and give advice when I have the chance—not that I am very fond of doing so, for they have a way of taking half and leaving the other half which spoils it all. Well—it is groping mostly. God knows what will come of it all! We can only trust and bide His time. My work is here plainly, at present, and I do not see how I am to get Emily [his wife] up here. I fear she could not stand the heat. I must confess, if God gave me a quiet resting-place where she and I could spend a few years in the land of Beulah, before we cross the river, I could wish for those years, but at present no such haven is in sight. If love could but rule the world, what a world it would be!"

February 12, 1893.

"Now that Mr. Surmon is back there is no need for those frequent trips to the Southern Protectorate, and I have rather a humdrum time of it here so far as actual work is concerned. My principal worries are not made by the people here, but by the men who ought to back me up behind. I have been having a good deal of hard writing and arguing lately. There is a tendency to give in to the Rhodes gang at the expense of the natives. At such times there is always a shade of uncertainty over my prospects; when a man is in the way, the bigwigs can get him out of it by some expedient or another. I have lived a life of faith too long to be perturbed as to the result."

You seem put out with the fancy that I am ignored. Do not let that trouble you. If a man wants to get himself advertised in the newspapers he can easily do so, and what then! No! Let me enjoy the cool and quiet shade. God knows whether I am doing my duty or not, and I do not want anything more. Trumpet-blowing always makes a man enemies: I have enough of them without that. I am infinitely obliged to everyone who abstains from mention of me. If anybody ought to know—I ought—the evils of popular applause. No one praises a chisel in the hands of a sculptor. A hundred other chisels are there, and any of them would do as well: it is the master hand that uses it, and what am I but an instrument? It is a privilege to be used, but no occasion for applause."

February 19, 1893.

"I have great difficulties here. Rhodes seems to be getting carried away with an encroaching and aggressive spirit and taking with him the powers that be. I really thought the other day that I should get the 'chuck-out,' for the High Commissioner cut up so rough about what is considered, I suppose, obstructiveness; but I cannot sit still and see such determined ignoring of the rights of chiefs and people. The heads at home do not want it, but the local people always get carried away. I stand amazed at the insatiable land-hunger of our race, and people like myself who cannot go with the stream have enough to do to keep our footing; but duty is a word with far-reaching meanings—leading away into eternity, in which this little day of moths and flies will be utterly forgotten, and I hope to hold fast, at any rate, of the guide rope of duty."

April 16, 1893.

"It is just possible that I may get down to Cape Town; the High Commissioner wishes me to go and talk to him about our affairs here.

Things are not at their best. The absurd restrictions on the sale of ammunition, the absolute necessity for the trade here, which consists almost entirely of the produce of hunting, are making the minds of the people very sore, and sapping their loyalty too. I suppose it will be the old story over again before long—and we shall have turned our best friends into our enemies.

The Government has just begun building a house for me. When it is finished we shall try for the mother to come up. She can but try, and if it does not answer we must see what God has in store for us."

June 25, 1893.

"I have had a flying visit to the Cape; it was only for eight days. My position is not entirely easy. I have to do with a chief who is a Christian man according to his lights, and a man thoroughly honest in his dealings with the British Government. This ought to mean that there is no difficulty whatever—but this is where the curious part of it comes in. If he is straight, there is a disposition on the part of the Government to be otherwise. They want to get out of Khama for the South Africa Company the sovereignty of the territory, so long called disputed, between the Matlousie and Shashe Rivers.

Khama is willing to let them have it, but stipulates that his existing occupation by cattle posts of certain parts of it shall be secured to him. He will not sign the cession till these rights are not only clearly secured but defined. They wanted to hoodwink him. I translated the somewhat ambiguous proposals of the High Commissioner into plain Saxon English and referred them back to him—saying that I must have mistaken his meaning. He backed out of that, had me down to the Cape and made much fuss over me. But he has relapsed and is now on the bullying tack.

He may bully me, but he won't bully Khama, who can be as stubborn as a mule when it comes to a trial. Moreover, I think Khama is in the right, and that it would be very bad for the question to have to go to the Colonial Office, for I fancy Lord Ripon is an honest man. Possibly, if the High Commissioner and the British South Africa Company find that they cannot make a tool of me, they will quietly shunt me on to some siding and put a different man here. Meanwhile it is not all smooth water here for me, and I have many a heartache over it and sigh for the days of Sir Hercules Robinson, one of the most scrupulous men I ever knew, and as invariable as the course of the sun."

The above extracts show what were the difficulties Moffat had to face from the start in his new post, but the

culminating-point of his unceasing struggle with those in power centres round the circumstances that led to the first Matabele War, which broke out in the latter half of 1893.

With the full history of that event there is no need here to deal.

The story has been told and retold from different stand-points, its complexion varying with the personal proclivities of the writers, as a rule with so much rancour and evident bias as to render their narratives worthless. For a plain and critical statement of the whole facts of the case the world still waits, and probably it will only be the historian of a later generation who will supply the need.

It is true an inquiry was held concerning the origin of the outbreak, but its findings are chiefly remarkable for the cloudy atmosphere of irrelevant hair-splitting in which they were enveloped. For instance, much time and energy were devoted to discussing the academic question what particular attitude a Matabele warrior would assume during a fight as a token of surrender, a posture probably never before witnessed by any white man.

The bare fact, which no sophistry could hide, remains that an unknown number of men were shot down at close quarters without any show of resistance.

Moffat's views of the manner in which this war was rushed upon Lobengula were characteristic of him, and his action illustrates, perhaps more clearly than any other single incident in his life, his stern uncompromising ideas respecting truth and justice, which may appear to some as the unpractical dreams of a hopeless idealist. The break-up of the Matabele tribe had long appeared to him as not only inevitable, but as something to be earnestly hoped for in the interests of humanity and civilisation; yet when the day of destiny dawned we find him strongly, nay bitterly, denouncing those who precipitated the conflict. To those who look below the surface the seeming paradox is easily explainable. There was no doctrine that he held in greater detestation than the Jesuistical one, which teaches that the end justifies the means. It added to his disgust and indignation that, while pursuing a deceitful course, we should "pose as the self-appointed fulfillers of the Divine purpose." He admitted that Lobengula and his people had long since filled up the cup

of their iniquities, and that they were reaping what they had sown, but this he held afforded no justification for anything but straight dealing on our part; whereas Lobengula's evasiveness and such double-dealing as he may have been guilty of were matched, or even surpassed, by those exhibited by his opponents.

That the initial episode, the so-called "Victoria incident" should be in Moffat's eyes horrible is not surprising. There can be no gainsaying that it was, as he calls it, a "cold-blooded massacre" of Matabele warriors who had been forbidden by their chief to lift their arms against the white men.

That this view was justifiable is shown by the following letter written to him by a gentleman who arrived in Victoria very shortly after. It is a sound straightforward account based upon first-hand information, and from a historical point of view is worth reproducing here.

VICTORIA,
September 24, 1893.

"The Matabele came into the country right in among the whites and murdered their servants, threatened and insulted them, and caused a regular panic through the country. Every white man had to come in and sleep in the forts and prepare to fight them; every stroke of work in this part was stopped.

This naturally made the whites, mostly a roughish sort, very angry, and they say they must go in and put a stop to all this sort of thing. At the same time Matabeleland and its loot are no doubt an attraction.

I feel strongly that Lobengula and the Matabele will not have fair play if the column without any notice marches into Bulawayo. They have made a huge mistake and have laid themselves open, but they should have a chance of repenting, and Lobengula should be offered terms first. He ought to be made to pay compensation—say in land—and he ought to understand that he must give up all claims to Mashonaland. If some terms of this sort were offered and he refused, go for him, and I will be the first to join. At present I am undecided what to do. I don't care about joining a filibustering expedition, but at the same time I don't like staying behind when all the other fellows are going in and want all hands to help. . . .

The Matabele were camped on a ridge of hills about three miles from here, and from these they scoured the country round. They killed a prospector's little Mashona boy in front of him. The youngster was leading his donkey, and some Matabele came up and, while some threatened the prospector, the others knocked the youngster on the head. The Rev. Sylvester, the clergyman here, had his boy killed as he was trying to run the gauntlet through the Matabele. They came into the town with their blood-stained spears.

Now for the other side.

After all this had been going on, Jameson sent for the indunas and told them that he gave them two hours to be across the border (Shashi) thirty miles off!! After about an hour Lendy, with about forty men, rode out, and about two or three miles from here came across some Matabele going west. One of the party told me about the battle. He says he only saw about fifty. —, who was out in front as a scout, says he saw about one hundred and fifty. They were a long way off. Lendy gave the order to charge and fire, and the police did so. After a chase they came up to them, and each one seems to have picked out his man and chased him. Most of the Matabele hid and got away. Those who were killed were shot in a decidedly cold-blooded way. As soon as a Matabele found he could not get away he fell on one knee and put up his little shield; the whites (some) rode up to within four or five yards and calmly shot them so, the Matabele not making the slightest resistance and not uttering a sound.

— said he never heard a groan though he wounded his man twice; the man then turned round and faced him and he shot him.

Another (an officer) told us he lost his horse, and that his man could easily have killed him with his assegai. When he, the officer, did kill him, he found eight bullet wounds in him. They say only one Matabele fired a shot: an old chap who was wounded turned, standing under a tree, and fired. No one knows how many were killed!!

They chased the Matabele for about two miles and then came back. Now, that is not a very glorious affair; it is rather different from all published accounts. It rather alters the case *re* the courage of the Matabele. It seems

to me they behaved rather pluckily, though I cannot make out their showing no fight at all.

A strange thing is that they had such small shields only. — says about the size of my hat.”

Looking at the whole matter judicially, it cannot be denied that the Matabele had given cause enough for deep resentment, and even the law takes count of provocation. But even so, it has to be remembered that these Matabele warriors were acting under the orders of their superior, and the ruthless slaying of them, though it may be excused as, in a sense, done in hot blood, was legally unjustifiable. Acting on the same principle, the crews of submarines and Zeppelins might have been shot down out of hand by their captors.

It may be admitted that it was comparatively easy for Moffat, seated far from the actual scene, to weigh the matter calmly and dispassionately; easier still is it for armchair critics to pour forth the vials of their indignation upon the conduct of those who were living in daily terror of their lives, and who had witnessed the pitiless deeds of those bloodthirsty warriors.

In truth the civilised development of Mashonaland alongside a barbarous military tyranny may have been an absurd dream, and possibly the Chartered Company were justified in deciding that the hour had struck to put an end to an impossible position.

But the killing of Lobengula's warriors represented, if not a crime, at any rate a hideous blunder. Lobengula might legitimately have taken it as a *casus belli*, and if he had at once slipped the dogs of war, the small unprepared force in Mashonaland would probably have been exterminated along with many innocent non-combatants living in Matabeleland. Had the administrator, Dr. Jameson, smothering his natural indignation, allowed the Matabele impi to retire, the Company could then have begun with a clear conscience to prepare for the inevitable conflict. If, when ready for it, an ultimatum had been delivered to Lobengula demanding that these things should cease, their conduct would have been unimpeachable, and no one, least of all Moffat, would have had a word to say, much though he might have regretted the necessity for an appeal to arms. Instead, the Company,

backed up by the Government, pretended they were seeking peace, until without a word of warning they invaded Lobengula's country, volubly protesting the while that they were forced to do so. This it was that sickened the soul of Moffat, for his superiors, while professing peace, meant war. Had they really desired a peaceful solution, they would at any rate have tried to secure it.

It is a painful story, and how keenly Moffat, jealous for the honour of his country, felt its disgrace is proved by his letters written at this time. His dignified protest to Sir Henry Loch must have caused that exalted person a little embarrassment, passed by in contemptuous silence though it was.

There are probably not many civil servants who have had the moral courage to write in such a strain to one occupying the position of Governor and High Commissioner in a British Colony.

To his Wife

August 15, 1893.

"I have had a day of it and so has the telegraphist. A message arrived this morning from Loben, which with its covering letter from Colenbrander (the Company's agent at Bulawayo) was duly wired on, and the volcano is in full blast again. The message was addressed to me and was as follows:

'I want to know from you, Son of Umshete; why don't you speak, why do you keep quiet? What great wrong have I done? I thought I wrote to tell you all, that I was only sending for my own stolen cattle amongst the Amahole (Mashonas). I want to know all about this matter. Tell me.'

His Excellency wired his answer to-night, which I consider a shuffling and unworthy one. He winds up his telegram with this: 'Send me by telegraph the text of any private message you may wish to send the King in your character as a personal friend prior to its being sent.' I have replied that 'under the circumstances I do not wish to send any private message to the King in my character as a personal friend.' Of course I expect to be jumped upon to-morrow as to what I mean by 'under the circumstances.' I cannot tell him, for I should have to say that I don't approve of the tone of the negotiations on his side, and

moreover that, if I cannot be trusted to send a personal message without having it first inspected like a schoolgirl's letters, I prefer to be silent. He contrives to tread on my toes almost every day. It is so different from the manly, trustful manner of Sir Hercules Robinson, and I do not think that he ever repented of his confidence. It is good for me to go to school again—I admit that the process is not agreeable.

Colenbrander's letters contain some pointed questions, but they are quite ignored by His Excellency; they are not convenient to answer.

P.S. 21st.—A letter from Colenbrander—he was coming out. The chief flatly refuses to make restitution of cattle and property destroyed unless the Mashona are delivered up to his tender mercies, so now it is little use looking for peace.”

On the face of it there does not appear to have been any real reason why Colenbrander should have left his post at Bulawayo just at this juncture.

His superiors in Cape Town, however, professed to be apprehensive for his safety, and two good riding horses were sent in by special runners for his benefit. Possibly he received privately an inkling of what was in the wind. The fact remains that he left Bulawayo and came out to Palapye, where for the remainder of the time he deliberately set himself to provoke hostilities by transmitting wild rumours and lying reports direct to Cape Town.

October 12, 1893.

“I think His Excellency has taken leave of his senses. I suppose the war party has just overpowered his better convictions—or else he has been . . . which I am more than half inclined to think is the case. I have thought it over much—the pros and cons. Would it be right for me to kick up a row and risk a rupture with the powers that be? His Excellency knows that I have steadfastly advocated a more peaceful line. He has dropped taking me into his confidence in consequence for the last fortnight. I am not a bit sorry for Loben and the Matabele. I am sorry for ourselves—that we can demean ourselves to act so dishonestly. As Khama may be the next victim, I want to

stick to him as long as I can. I hope I am right—I sincerely want to be.”

October 13.

“I have got another blister on with the Governor.

Yesterday Colenbrander came to me with one of his scares about the movements of Loben and some impis on the Shangani River. I pointed out to him that this was highly improbable—he had got it from a casual boy who came out from Bulawayo after leaving that place on the 19th of last month. I have letters from Bulawayo down to the 28th, and never a word of this. Colenbrander left the office apparently satisfied, and then without saying a word to me wires the whole yarn to His Excellency, giving it a colouring of his own and stating that he had informed me; this morning His Excellency wires to me to know why I have not communicated with him on the subject. I have told him what I tell you, except the last sentence about the colouring, for I had not then seen Colenbrander’s telegram. I told him, moreover, that I had consulted Mr. Helm and that he had seen with me the improbability of the story. I have gone on to say that I had done my best to keep him posted up in news, and that, if he is not satisfied, I shall be enchanted to stand aside and give Colenbrander an innings as purveyor of Matabele news; and that I regret that Colenbrander should have wired to him without telling me, as it tends to destroy the good understanding I have tried to maintain with those with whom I have to co-operate.

I afterwards saw Colenbrander and showed him His Excellency’s telegram. He squirmed about and was evidently very uncomfortable. I said very little. He excused himself on the ground that His Excellency had requested him to wire everything that he hears—this may be so, but ought not to be while I am here.”

October 14.

“I have had a wiggling for my remark about standing aside and giving Colenbrander his innings; being told it was uncalled for and improper—so I have promptly withdrawn it, but I have repeated my objection to the dual arrangement. I have had my say, and I hope it will clear the air a little bit. His Excellency admits that some action has been taken on Colenbrander’s message that would have been prevented had I wired, so this is the second time Colen-

brander has acted as a sort of firebrand, and yet His Excellency goes on encouraging direct communication with him. I except you will side with the Governor and say that I was wrong in my remark. Well! I don't think you would blame me if you had heard everything.

I have letters from Bulawayo up to the 4th of this month. Dawson [a trader] says that Loben repudiates having sent any impis to the border, and he is waiting to hear what is the result of the Cape Town mission! [He had sent an induna to see the Governor.]”

October 20.

“Another letter from Loben yesterday. He says: ‘Send one of your own men to go with my people to show me where these impis are for I do not know. I see the white men want to fight, but why do they not say so?’ Why, indeed?

I have just come from a conversation with His Excellency at the telegraph office: apparently the war mania is at the full swing, and I have just sent on a despatch to Colonel Goold-Adams authorising him to go right on to Bulawayo. There is no longer even the thin pretence of a desire for peace, the utter farce which they have attempted to keep up. I am carefully kept from giving an opinion of my own.”

The instructions to Major Goold-Adams referred to by Moffat represented the opening of hostilities. They were sent by the Governor on the strength of a report that had been brought in by a patrol of Goold-Adams' police to the effect that they had been fired upon by some Matabele. Subsequent operations failed to demonstrate the presence of any Matabele impis in that vicinity.

Further, when it is remembered that these same police a few days later, in their nervous excitement, shot two unoffending Government post-boys—not to mention the killing of Lobengula's envoys—it is legitimate to accept this evidence with some reserve. Moreover, this story is entirely discredited by the fact that at the very time Lobengula's envoys were on their way out to see the Governor.

Sunday, October 22.

“I am tingling all over with pain and disgust. Dawson arrived to-day from Bulawayo bringing the saddest story.

He was sent down by Lobengula with Ingubogubo, a brother Mantuse—also an induna, a fine young fellow whom I knew well—and the brother of Gambo, one of the greatest men in the country. They arrived at Tati, and to their utter astonishment found Colonel Goold-Adams there with his force. Dawson left them to go and have a drink with one of the officers. While he was away these men—envoys, mind you, sent with a message to the Governor—were put under an armed guard. Mantuse got frightened, snatched a bayonet from one of the guards and tried to escape, slightly wounding one of the men. *He was shot dead!* Gambo's brother was knocked on the head with the butt-end of a gun. *He is dead too!* The other—poor old Ingubogubo—kept still and is alive.

That is No. 1. No. 2.—The post-boys from Bulawayo, with another boy coming along with them, came to Tati all unsuspecting; some similar blunder occurred, and one of them was shot dead, another lies wounded, the third escaped. And we call ourselves a civilised and Christian nation! And here am I gagged and tied hand and foot. I do not think I can stand it much longer. It is an intolerable servitude. To know that all these abominations are going on, and to have reports ignored and set aside for the lies of a man like Colenbrander just because it suits the book of the Governor and the Chartered Company.”

Monday, 23rd.

“I have had a sleepless night. If I followed my impulse, I should chuck up and cut this despicable business. But, on the other hand, would it be any use? Should I not be simply squelched by the boundless resources of the Company and the High Commissioner together, and I shall be forsaking Khama and leaving him to his enemies. I hope I am not weakly adopting a course of mere worldly expediency. I want to do what is right, but it is very hard to see the way.

The Matabele are reaping what they have sown, but I am ashamed for ourselves. If not broken up, what Government messenger would ever be safe in Matabeleland after the murder of these envoys by us? I feel ashamed to look even the people here in the face, or to speak to them about it.

I have written a letter to the Governor, private and confidential, telling him the truth and the whole truth about my feelings. He has sent a message of feeble regret to Goold-Adams about the envoys and has directed him to make an inquiry. Why! Goold-Adams is himself the man upon whom the inquiry ought to be made. The post-boys incident has startled him, but he does not care to believe anybody but his dear police.

There is a God that judgeth on the earth, and this cannot go on—but it is hard to sit still and feel the fire burning within.”

Letter in full to His Excellency

Confidential.

PALAPYE,
October 23, 1893.

To His Excellency Sir H. B. Loch, G.C.M.G., G.C.B., etc.

MY DEAR SIR HENRY,

I feel compelled to relieve my heart by sending you a few lines about my personal position in reference to this Matabele war. I spent several hours of last night in sleepless misery pondering the question as to whether it was not my duty to wash my hands of any further complicity in the affair by resigning my appointment. By doing so, I should have a free hand and be able to address myself to those who would be willing to listen to me. I must confess the desire was very strong upon me—and intensified by the horrible news from Tati yesterday. On the other hand, I plainly see that when the Chartered Company has worked its will upon Lobengula, it will turn and use similar tactics, with a difference, of course, upon Khama. I do not feel much sympathy with the Matabele and their chief—we may be pursuing a dishonourable, because an unchristian, course towards them: so much the worse for us; but they are only reaping what they have sown.

I feel very differently about Khama and the Baman-gwato. The Government has placed me in a position to befriend them: and I shall not scruple to do my utmost for them as long as I am permitted to retain that position.

But if I remain as I am here, I cannot do so without telling you plainly that I cannot approve of the course

which has been pursued towards Lobengula. It has not been lost upon me that unmitigated falsehoods such as those of Mr. Colenbrander have been published far and wide by the Chartered Company to give some kind of colour to the excuse for an aggressive policy; and that the other side of the question—in my communications to Your Excellency—has not been allowed to reach the eye of the public; and so far as I can judge from the Blue Book, which has just reached me, has scarcely had adequate representation in the Colonial Office.

I may be wrong in this latter statement—I can only judge by appearances. Had a plain and straightforward ultimatum been sent to Lobengula, with the alternative of war, I should not have had a word to say; but he has been led to believe there was no immediate intention to invade his country, and that there was nothing that had gone beyond the stage of peaceful negotiation.

I have faithfully and honestly tried to carry out orders and to perform my official duties, though I have often been found fault with—I consider unjustly—by Your Excellency in this respect. I shall continue to do so, now that I have made my protest—and I have no responsibility, for I have come to be little more than a mere repeating machine for Your Excellency's messages, and have ceased to exercise any personal discretion or private judgment.

I am, dear Sir Henry,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) J. S. MOFFAT.

And so, after its appropriate prelude, the curtain rose on the last act of the grim tragedy, which with ever-gathering momentum rushed on to its appointed climax, and on March 18, 1894, Moffat writes:

“ You will have heard that Loben is dead. I am thankful he is released from the painful and humiliating alternative of captivity. He was, of course, a miserable savage, and acted according to his surroundings; but in the matter of this war he has been treated shamefully. The British South Africa Company forced it upon him, and it is a discreditable page—one of many—in our national history. The Cape papers, most of them, are too subservient to the Company to tell the true story. It seems to be God's Will that

this unjust business should be passed over—for the present—and I have given up troubling about it.”

So far as his official life was concerned, for Moffat too this war marked the beginning of the end. The triumph of might over right in a sense broke his heart, and he turned almost with loathing from the livery that he wore. Moreover, he had become a marked man, and his differences with those in power rendered his future dealings with them difficult, and bred a spirit of mutual antagonism which with him threatened to become almost an obsession. In such circumstances the lonely life he led was harmful, tending as it did to introspection and brooding, and it was providential that just at this juncture he arranged that his wife and eldest daughter should come to Palapye. In May 1894, therefore, he went to Cape Town to fetch them, and writing from there, he refers with prophetic instinct to Rhodes :

“The great Rhodes is prancing round. He returned last week from Pondoland. He has too much on his shoulders, and will probably end by making a mess of it, but meanwhile everybody here is bowing down and worshipping him as the wisest of men. The popular tide is with him. Great is success! I wonder the old Greeks and Romans never had a God of Success—that is the sort of god which would be popular nowadays. I suppose there will be a crash some day—and men will suddenly recollect that there is still such a thing as justice even to niggers.”

The Government had built a house for the Assistant Commissioner at Palapye, so Moffat could now give his wife and daughter suitable quarters, and for the first time after fifteen years he settled down in a home of his own.

In doing so he looked forward hopefully to a few more years of official life in more comfortable personal circumstances, but it was not to be.

Meanwhile officially matters were going from bad to worse; his suspicions in regard to the future treatment of Khama by those in power were abundantly justified, and so the strife went on, much as he longed for rest.

“My chief concern,” he wrote, “is to stick to Khama, and I shall stand by him as long as I can. At present I have the foothold here, and I look upon the appointment as

a trust which I could not lightly give up. Otherwise I should be thankful to accept some subordinate position.

In the matter of the Matabele War I did not gain any favour from Sir Henry Loch, who has acted as a mere puppet of Mr. Rhodes himself—and it goes without saying that I have not pleased Mr. Rhodes himself.

Now there is worse in store. Khama is to be the next victim. Rhodes passed here this morning, and said in so many words that if Khama stands in his way he will walk over him. Now, Khama is not Lobengula; the latter was a savage. Khama is a Christian, and according to his light a very fair specimen of one. He has, moreover, striven to meet the British Government in every possible way. I do not think he would ever fight—his only hope is an appeal to the Queen and to the people of England. Unhappily we know what a broken reed that is to lean upon.

Rhodes went for me personally—to use the common phrase he has got his knife into me, and the odds, humanly speaking, are greatly against me. So my peaceful home life is crowded by these dark prospects, and there appears to be stress and toil and storm ahead.

I am not equal to these things now, and sigh for a quiet resting-place. After all I have to thank God for much. I know that right must win ultimately, though that may not be on this side of Jordan.”

Moffat's account of this interview with Rhodes is bald and uncomplaining, but, as a matter of fact, the latter quite forgot himself and overstepped the bounds of courtesy. It is not a pleasant picture upon which to dwell: the successful financier and politician, armed with wealth and influence, rating like a dog the grey-bearded veteran and faithful civil servant; not for misconduct nor for neglect of duty, but because he owned allegiance to a Higher Power than that of men.

The fall of the Rosebery Ministry, the departure of Sir Henry Loch and the appointment of Sir Hercules Robinson (Lord Rosmead) as Governor, brought a glimmer of hope to Moffat that better things might yet be in store.

Writing on June 30, 1895, he says:

“Mr. Rhodes' Company is steadily and persistently pressing upon Khama, encroaching wherever it can. The conduct of Lord Ripon, now ex-Colonial Secretary, has

been that of a piece of putty. Between him and Sir Henry Loch the Chartered Company have had it all their own way, and a very disgraceful way it is. We shall soon know where we are, and whether Her Majesty's Government is to remain the mere plaything of a financial Company."

But now there fell the last unkindest blow of all, when Khama, the man for whom he had done and suffered so much, turned against him. Though a good, and for a native an exceptional, man, Khama in his own limited sphere tended to be autocratic and could brook no opposition. Two years previously, owing to his interfering in church matters, he had quarrelled with his old friend the missionary, Hepburn, who in consequence had been obliged to leave. Lately he had become involved in a dispute with his brothers, which eventually resulted in a section of the tribe's breaking away after enduring a good deal of mild persecution and injustice. Moffat considered that Khama was playing a wrong and unworthy part, and as usual had no scruples in pointing this out. This led to a breach in the hitherto unbroken confidence, which on the part of Khama deepened into resentment and antagonism, and in the end he went so far as to request the Government to remove Moffat from Palapye. In ordinary circumstances, probably, no attention would have been paid to such a demand, but for various reasons it coincided with the wishes of the authorities. Thus it came about that in August 1895 Moffat was transferred to his old station Taungs. Luckily for Khama, other causes conspired to extricate him from the toils of his enemies, otherwise he might have lived to regret the day when he parted with the best of his friends.¹

Moffat, realising perhaps that his official days were numbered, arranged for his wife to return to Cape Town and reverted once more to a lonely life at Taungs.

¹ Judging from various incidents in later times, it would appear that the years brought to Khama enlightenment mingled with some measure of regret.

However that may be, when the news of his old friend's death reached him he sent a telegram of condolence to Mr. H. U. Moffat, with whom he was personally acquainted. This was followed by a letter in which he expressed his own grief, concluding with a touch of that apt metaphor into which the native mind is so prone to stray: "The flowers which your grandfather planted and which your father watered are still blooming in Bechwanaland."

CHAPTER XXIV

TAUNGS AND END OF OFFICIAL CAREER, 1895-1896

TRANSLATED into plain English, Moffat's transfer meant that he had been shelved; in a loaded scale he had been weighed and found wanting. His appointment to an unimportant magistracy after all he had been and done, if not a studied insult, was at any rate a clear snub.

Kuruman, where he would have been still farther out of the way, had been at first suggested as his destination, but at his own request Taungs was selected instead. The place had lost what little importance it once possessed, for the railway, having come, had passed beyond, leaving it a mere wayside station to serve the needs of the native town and its few attendant storekeepers.

Moffat bowed to the inevitable without complaint, and though weary of Government service, he waited for that Divine leading to which he ever trusted, strong in the conviction that, if work there yet remained for him to do in the service, the opportunity would not fail.

But many changes were looming in the distance. The Home Government had agreed to the annexation of British Bechwanaland by the Colony, and Moffat, on his transfer, had received an assurance that his services would be taken over by the new Government. Concerning the Protectorates, Rhodes had already given out publicly that these had been promised to him, that is to the Chartered Company, so it appeared that the British Government had only one aim in view, to be quit of all responsibility in South Africa. In these circumstances it is doubtful if Moffat would have taken service in the Protectorate under the Company even if it had been desired. As a matter of fact, Rhodes had no further use for one who had already done so much to frustrate his schemes and designs for outwitting Khama. For

another reason Moffat's presence at Palapye would have been highly inconvenient at this juncture. The plot that resulted in the ghastly fiasco of the Jameson Raid was already being hatched, and it would have been courting disaster to have a man like him seated at Palapye. To let him into the secret was out of the question; to hoodwink him difficult. The movement of the Company's armed forces to the border, coupled with other obvious preparations, would have aroused his suspicions, and he would have instantly reported matters to the Governor, who would then have had no excuse for pleading ignorance when the mine finally exploded.

To get Moffat shunted off out of the way naturally presented itself as a wise precaution, and though his transfer from the Protectorate depended upon the sanction of the Imperial Government, Rhodes would have little difficulty in arranging it. Sir Hercules Robinson, from whose return Moffat had hoped so much, had proved a broken reed. He had aged and was no longer the man he had been; in fact his days were already numbered, and he left South Africa in broken health after a short and inglorious term of office. Having come reluctantly and against his own better judgment, he seemed content to go with the stream, and his second term as Governor added nothing to his reputation, but rather the reverse.

Moffat, unfortunately, was out of touch with him and did not see him, whereas Rhodes, at his elbow in Cape Town, played with him as with a puppet. The threatened handing over of the Protectorates to the Company raised a storm of angry protests from the chiefs concerned, and three of them, including Khama, went off to England to protest against such a flagrant violation of the contracts by which they had placed themselves, not under the protection of a commercial company, but under that of the Queen. Whether this move would have availed them one iota is doubtful, but meanwhile vaulting ambition elsewhere met its appropriate end. Whatever evils the abortive Jameson Raid may have caused, in one way it proved a blessing to South Africa. It broke for ever, except financially, the power of Rhodes, which threatened to degenerate into a tyranny in South Africa and a baleful spell over those in authority in England; incidentally, also, it curbed the overweening arrogance of the Chartered Company, which during

its short period of existence had been guilty of more than one act that under any self-respecting Government in England might have involved its abrogation. Even the raid did not bring this well-merited penalty, but after such an exhibition of unscrupulous villainy on the part of its local representatives it had to walk warily and to avoid drawing upon itself the attention of the civilised world. A few months later it had trouble enough upon its hands in the shape of the rinder-pest and the Matabele rebellion. Having survived these perils, it emerged as a commercial company shorn of power and influence except in its own legitimate sphere.

British Bechwanaland in due course was annexed to the Colony, and the Protectorates remained as before. Shortly after, when the post of Commissioner for the Protectorates was instituted, the one man best fitted to fill it was passed over in favour of another with not a tittle of his knowledge, experience, or influence. But this disturbed him not; he had fought a good fight as a servant of the Crown, but looking back upon the long day of strife, he realised mournfully how futile and how barren of good results his efforts had apparently been. So when the call came to leave the field he welcomed it almost with relief. The twelve months spent at Taungs were for the most part uneventful so far as he was concerned, but a few extracts from his letters will tell something of his last days in Government service :

TAUNGS,
August 25, 1895.

“ I arrived here last Wednesday. I am, of course, at the hotel—not much comfort, but it will do for the present.

I don't intend to use the magistracy unless the mother comes later. It would appear that Khama has gone to England—with the other two chiefs. He was interviewed in Cape Town and said a good deal that was not true, at least as reported. I am, however, muzzled and must possess my soul in patience. The truth is great and will out some day, but meanwhile much injustice is being done. These things are hard to understand.

We are all on the rampage here with smallpox—I hope it will give an impetus to vaccination. There is a chemist here but no medico. Two have tried—too fond of liquor—and have cleared.”

October 6, 1895.

“ I do not feel the being passed over, as you call it. But it is a bit hard to be shoved up into a corner, where my mouth is closed and I am carefully prevented from having a say in anything upon matters about which, without any conceit, I may consider myself as about the best living authority. On the other hand, looked at from the disciplinary point of view, this sort of setting down is wholesome, and I am not too old to learn the lesson of adversity. Probably I shall not be kept here long; it is contrary to the nature of things to suppose that the Cape Government, when it takes over, will be content to go on paying me my present screw for the work of an R.M. in a place where one is scarcely needed. You will recollect that when I was here before I had the Kuruman District as well, and at that time there was a certain amount of land and other outside questions to be dealt with. Now—barring the work which a smallpox epidemic is giving—I am at a loss to know what my predecessors did with themselves.

I see interesting accounts in the English papers of Khama's goings and doings. Meanwhile the Chartered Company, with Sir Sidney Shippard, is stealing a march on the ‘ kings ’ out here, and these, when they come back, will find everything cut and dried and some most astonishing arrangements already made with some of their land, with not so much as ‘ By your leave.’ I can hardly believe that this is being done without cable instructions from home, which would seem to imply that the appeal to the Colonial Office has been futile. It is this sort of work which makes me glad that I have been taken out of the Protectorate.

Mr. Surmon is wishing now that he could get back to old Basutoland, and away from being a helpless spectator of these little games.”

November 17, 1895.

“ On Friday night the British Bechwanaland Government died a natural death after a somewhat feeble course of ten years, and yesterday we commenced our duties under the Cape. It is early days to give an opinion yet as to how far it is an improvement. Personally I do not feel settled. A much more economical arrangement might be made than to keep me here on my present footing. What is to be done with me I do not know—that is a question for them to

tackle. I should not be sorry to be pensioned off. I am tired. I suppose I must accept the fact that age is creeping on. I do not like to be pretending to do my work : so I should be glad to get into a quiet corner somewhere and rest ; but I wait the first proposal from the other side. As to Khama, every dog has his day. My feelings about him are distinctly divided. I wish him every success in his resistance to the Company ; it is just that he should succeed. On the other hand, I have learned that native chieftainship is bad—bad in every way—even with such a good man as Khama, and am not sorry for anything which breaks it up. I have long held this view, vaguely and mildly, and the last twelve months have burned it into me. Nevertheless I could forgive Khama if I could see where his brothers are to come out in this dispute with him. So far we have dealt out gross injustice to them, and they are practically exiled.”

April 30, 1896.

“ We are having wave after wave of misfortune. The rainfall has been short, and locusts in many places have eaten up what corn had managed to live. Then that maniac Jameson must needs plunge the whole country into confusion and reawaken the spirit of discord between Dutch and English by his mad rush to Johannesburg. Then there is the rinderpest, and now the Matabele business. Many good men have lost their lives already, and the thing is not over yet. As if these things were not enough, some villains have been trying to get up a scare in Bechwanaland and to embroil English and natives, but it is really too thin. To-day comes the news that the Reform leaders in Johannesburg have been sentenced to death and the rank and file to a fine of £2,000 each, with two years' imprisonment and then three years' banishment. Of course the death sentence will never be carried out, but it is a brutal insult to the men and a slap in the face for England. This is what Jameson's raid has brought us to, for we have been put in the wrong and must be meek. So altogether South Africa is not happy.

I am no nearer settlement than I was, but am not perturbed, being willing to take what comes. I shall be glad to be settled one way or the other, for hotel life gets monotonous.”

June 24, 1896.

“ I suppose this is my last letter from Taungs. If all be well, my time here will expire on Tuesday, the 30th. It has been decided to merge this magistracy with Vryburg and to place an assistant R.M. here, and the Government has no suitable appointment to offer me instead, so I am requested to retire on pension. It will not be very much, but as a rest it will be acceptable. I cannot say my experience of the Colonial service this time has charmed me, and the mother and I will hope to have a few years together in some quiet corner. I have no plans; I go to Cape Town and will be guided by circumstances as to a choice of habitation.”

Thus ended Moffat's official career. It may appear to some that its history, as recorded here, would tend to indicate on his part a spirit of wilful bellicosity and cantankerousness; for wherever he appeared his presence, like that of a stormy petrel, heralded the coming tempest. And yet, strange as it may seem, he was in reality the most peace-loving of men, and the conflicts in which he became embroiled offer a sad commentary on the standards of honour that too often rule in official circles.

It is sometimes said that to be a good business man is incompatible with a high ethical code, and the same no doubt applies to any walk in life that involves a struggle between conscience and self-interest. Unquestionably Government service in this respect presents special dangers and temptations, and a perusal of Moffat's experiences will amply demonstrate the truth of the observation already made, that he was one of the most unsuitable of men for such a career.

He might certainly have had an easier and more successful life had he been content to “cough and look the other way,” when the doing so would save him trouble. But this was just what he refused to do, and in consequence he spent much time and energy, like a modern Quixote, tilting, if not at windmills, at any rate at every obstacle that came across his path, if it only happened to bear the hallmark of wrong, deceit, or injustice.

An apt illustration of this is at hand in the shape of one of the last letters he ever wrote as a Government official. It was a private and confidential one addressed to the Prime Minister of the Colony, and explains itself. Is it a

matter for surprise that those in power should in self-protection have seized the first opportunity for getting rid of such a troublesome and unruly member of their confraternity?

Confidential.

To Sir Gordon Sprigg, K.C.M.G.

TAUNGS,
May 22, 1896.

MY DEAR SIR GORDON,

I have felt some perplexity about a transaction taking place through my office—not that I have any hesitation in pronouncing upon the character of it, but I do not quite know what is my own duty as an individual apart from official discipline.

Before the annexation a certain (gentleman) was appointed to act . . . (during an emergency) in the district of Taungs, and he has been continued in that capacity by the Colonial Government up to date. I have not the slightest compunction in saying that . . . (this person) has trifled with his duties, and I have more than once officially reported this to the Colonial Secretary's office, but all my representations have been resolutely ignored. For some time there has been a deadlock in the matter of payment, as I have felt unable to sign a certificate on the vouchers that the alleged service has been duly rendered.

This difficulty has been got over by an imperious telegram from the Colonial Secretary ordering me to pay at once what 'is owing' to . . . (the person concerned), and stating that if I cannot sign the certificates . . . (the gentleman) will sign them himself.

Now this is simple jobbery. Of course I obey, but I have recorded my protest officially to the Colonial Secretary. This is all I can do as a Civil Commissioner. But as a man troubled with the infirmity of a Nonconformist conscience—in which I would fain believe I have a fellow-sufferer in yourself—I do not feel easy in being silent. I am quite safe in confiding my difficulty to you.

I have been accustomed to regard the Accounting Department in the Colonial Secretary's office as addicted to straining out gnats, but that it should swallow a camel in this unexpected fashion shakes one's nerves. Much time and patience are spent in replying to innumerable queries about sixpences for postage stamps, and why a

woman was paid six shillings for washing clothes at the lazaretto without a special order from the Colonial Secretary; but when it comes to a real good gobble of sixty or seventy pounds by someone who happens to have friends at Court, I am supposed to cough and look the other way.

I do not go so far as to say that . . . (the gentleman in question) is entitled to nothing, but it appears to me that a considerable moiety of what he gets in this transaction will be money obtained on false pretences. I write to you because you are Prime Minister and may know some way to mend things of this kind, and also—as I have already said—because I count on a certain kind of sympathy.

I am,

Dear Sir Gordon,

Yours sincerely,

J. S. MOFFAT.

In calculating his service for pension the authorities adhered to the strict letter of the law, and his retiring allowance did not err on the side of generosity. It is true his service had been a broken one, part of it under Imperial and part under Colonial administration, but this through no fault of his own; and between the two he fared scantily.

In this connection one fact should, in justice to the Chartered Company, be mentioned. When Moffat went to Matabeleland in 1890 he felt that the undertaking involved a good deal of risk, and he stipulated that in the event of his death provision should be made for his wife.

This having been agreed to, he dismissed the subject from his mind, but in 1895, prior to his departure from Palapye, he learnt from Mr. C. W. Rudd that the Company, with praiseworthy promptitude, had at once put aside the sum of £2,000 on behalf of Mrs. Moffat, and that this they now proposed to hand over to her in the shape of interest bearing debenture shares of the Chartered Company. In reply Moffat, while thanking them for their generosity, pointed out that his position as a Government official precluded, directly or indirectly, his deriving any advantage from the Company, and that in consequence it was impossible for Mrs. Moffat to avail herself of this provision, which he had understood only related to the contingency of his death.

After he had left the service, the proceeds of the sale of these shares were apparently paid over to Mrs. Moffat, but

of the attendant circumstances there is no mention among Moffat's papers.

Some critics might contend that, in view of his strong views concerning the behaviour of the Company, it would have been more consistent for him to refuse any benefits from it. But, since his own pension would lapse with his death, he may not have felt justified in refusing this provision for his wife in the event of his predeceasing her. However that may be, it is impossible, in the absence of further details, to express any decided opinion on the subject, and when it is considered how much he had done for the Empire, it can hardly be questioned that he deserved this recognition from those who had indirectly benefited from his work.

Strangely enough, he himself in the end reaped little advantage from it. On the death of his wife the money passed to him, but only for about two years did it bring him any returns. A too optimistic solicitor, in whose hands the business had been left, had invested the sum in Cape Town house property, and owing to the slump that occurred in land values after the Boer War, the investment for the last fourteen years of Moffat's life proved a source of expense rather than of profit to him.

This, however, was not the fault of the Chartered Company, and in view of Moffat's uncompromising hostility towards their policy, it is only right that it should be recorded that the Directors were not wanting in gratitude, and that they acknowledged the debt they owed to him.

How far Rhodes was responsible it is impossible to say, but the action was one in keeping with a character that, so far as money matters were concerned, had nothing in it of the mean or petty. One other point perhaps deserves notice here.

After the rebellion of 1896 the Chartered Company, having learned its lesson, inaugurated a new policy towards the natives under the watchful eye of the Imperial Government, and in later years Moffat freely and willingly admitted that in no other part of South Africa are the general interests of the natives more carefully safeguarded than in this same Rhodesia, whose black inhabitants in the years 1893-6 had suffered so much of injustice and misgovernment under the administration of Dr. Jameson. And yet—strange irony of history!—this man found sepulture

with pomp and honour among the everlasting hills of the Matappos, whose very rocks, had they tongues, might well cry aloud their indignant protest.

In a measure, therefore, it may be said that the work of Moffat in the end has borne some fruit ; but in looking back upon the record of his official life, two thoughts can scarce fail to enforce attention on the reflective mind. First, how seldom it is that power falls into the hands of those best suited to use it ; or is it that power is a poisonous gift that vitiates the soul of him who gains it ? Second, how fair a world this might be if mankind—or even the majority thereof—not content with inculcating high ideals, should strive to put these into practice.

PART IV
THE YEARS OF FREEDOM

CHAPTER XXV

THE PREACHER

THE sixteen years spent by Moffat in Government service had in no way influenced the main direction of his aims and aspirations; at all times and seasons he had taken a firm stand, never ceasing to regard himself as otherwise than one dedicated to the service of God. It was this feeling that led him to cling tenaciously to his title as an ordained minister, and writing to his father-in-law shortly after entering Government service, he refers to this point:

“ You say, you presume you must now drop the ‘ Reverend.’ You can please yourself about this. I have never set store on a ‘ handle’ to my name, being somewhat Quakerish on this point; but there is a spice of affectation about rejecting it when it is one of the established conventionalities of life, and on this account I retain it. The only argument in favour of it is the tendency of some people to think that I have laid aside the right to preach. Not at all. I have preached every Sunday when opportunity offered both in Sechwana and English. I give the Government my week-days, but not Sundays.”

It was, moreover, a reminder that he had in his keeping the dignity and honour of what might, figuratively speaking, be styled his cloth, and this not only in theory but in practice, for his behaviour was at all times in keeping with his true calling, however secular his duties might be.

Consequently when he retired from Government service his status automatically settled itself. Like a stream diverted by fortuitous obstacles from its proper channel and afterwards regaining it, Moffat fell back into his rightful place in the eyes of the world, so that men meeting him forgot the ex-civil servant, and saw only the still ardent missionary.

It was indeed curious to note how, among his fellow Christians and former colleagues, all the old prejudices had melted away, and far from disputing his right to be numbered among themselves, they were proud to welcome him back with open arms. It was a striking tribute to the honesty and fearless courage of one who had never lowered his colours during the years when he fought the good fight alone and single-handed.

Except indirectly, Moffat had little opportunity of engaging in active missionary work during these later years of his life, and he spent most of this time in ministering to the spiritual needs of his own fellow-countrymen. For this reason it has seemed desirable to refer with some detail to his qualifications, opinions, and character, so far as they are related to this particular sphere of his activities.

As a preacher it cannot be said that he was either remarkable or popular. He was heard at his best, perhaps, when addressing natives, whose needs and point of view he understood so well.

Possibly his long ministry among simple minds like theirs to some extent unfitted him for more critical audiences, and his grave, measured style did not always appeal to a modern congregation.

Though well read in the literature of his own tongue, he made no claim to erudition nor profundity of thought; the chief characteristic of his sermons was their deep earnestness and practicality. As might be expected from a man of his habit, he was not one of those who would speak comfortable things for the mere sake of doing so, or cry Peace, when there was no Peace, and his blunt criticisms not infrequently annoyed those who resent listening to unpleasant truths that disturb the easy current of a self-satisfied existence.

His denunciations of wrong and oppression, or of falsehood and neglect of duty, would sometimes kindle a flash of the genuine fire of oratory, but as a rule his strong self-restraint and unimpassioned delivery detracted from the real value of his sermons.

Though a rich vein of sentiment, to which his love of poetry bore witness, ran through his character, he had in well-developed form that Scotch trait that inculcates self-control and undemonstrativeness. This led to a rooted dislike on his part to all volubility, especially in the matter

of sacred things and religious experiences, and he never sought nor wished to pry into the holy of holies of another's soul.

It followed that, while convinced of the necessity and reality of the process known as regeneration, he looked with suspicion on those strange ebullitions that by some are regarded as essential accompaniments thereof.

While admitting that the wind bloweth where it listeth, and that it is not ours to set bounds to its activities and effects, he could never bring himself to approve of, nor to support, so-called Revivals; and though acknowledging that good might sometimes follow from them, he distrusted their frothy and often ephemeral results.

On one occasion a young and fervent preacher had been conducting a special campaign at the school where his daughter was a pupil, and there had followed an epidemic of those hysterical symptoms that some affect to look upon as manifestations of Pentecostal showers. On hearing of this unedifying state of things Moffat promptly removed his daughter, though in such a way as to give no offence to those who were responsible, for he recognised the worthiness of their motives.

Though what might be called an intensely religious man, there is no record of his having gone through any of those initial seasons of mental and spiritual conflict that are a prominent feature in the lives of some men before they find rest for their souls. Only once does he refer to this subject in any of his extant letters, and this in writing to his mother, when he was looking forward to his first Communion. At the time he was living in Bedford and worshipping in Bunyan's chapel, the influence of which can be traced in his rather conventional phraseology. Even so, and allowing for the natural enthusiasm of youth, he writes in a subdued and manly way, expressing the hope that, having given himself up to "the great and glorious work," he might "not be found wanting."

He belonged to the strictly evangelical school, and his theology was of the type that is now becoming old-fashioned. The ever-rising flood of modern rationalistic thought passed him by almost untouched, leaving all his old land-marks unshaken, and it was a source of real grief to him in his later years that so many of the Congregational Churches in South Africa appeared to him to be tainted with Unitarian-

ism. He had no faith in what he called "the gasbags of the Higher Criticism."

"As a minister," he writes, "let us have someone who will set himself to seek and to save that which is lost and preach the gospel of repentance. It is this negative and destructive criticism, this false doctrine or no doctrine at all, which, as far as I can see, is withering away some of the Congregational Churches in South Africa, for the Atonement and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are ignored, and that means spiritual death to the Church and individual Christian."

Naturally he looked askance, or even with hostility, at those ministers who professed and taught advanced views, and he watched with painful interest the vagaries of men like the Rev. R. J. Campbell, concerning whom he wrote :

March 13, 1906.

"Mr. Campbell's personality is very winning, and I have a great regard for him and he has been very kind to me ; but his later sermons as reported have given me much discomfort of mind. He is too metaphysical for the average man, and he makes too free with what the average man like myself regards as fundamental verities. No doubt, in a place like London, there are people enough who like that sort of thing, but possibly the Colonial mind is too homely and simple to rise into the cloud-land of metaphysic. The Scriptures are good enough for us as they are without being translated into a language which to us has either a non-natural meaning or no meaning at all. Mr. Campbell may do good work yet if he would be content to let go his dreamy mysticism in which he has become befogged and fall back upon the few definite facts, although mysterious facts, which lie at the back of everything."

What may be called his creed, a comparatively simple one, retained to the end something of its inherited Puritan complexion, faintly tinged, perhaps, by a softened Calvinism.

While tending to intolerance in the matter of unbelief, the same cannot be said of his attitude towards mere externals. Though naturally devoted to that form of Church Government that appeared to him closest to primitive

Christianity, viz. Congregationalism, he was ever ready to join wholeheartedly with Christians of any other Protestant denomination. If at any time or place only one church was available, there he would be found on Sunday, and when in London nothing pleased him better than to attend at St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey. Though the pomp and ceremonies of the Anglican Church did not appeal to him, it was sufficient for him that those who practised them were his fellow-Christians.

Nevertheless, for himself he gloried in being a Dissenter. Church establishment and the privileges claimed by Anglican orders he regarded as principles based upon shifting sand, and the slightest suspicion of bigotry or of clerical interference with the liberty of the soul roused in him the old fighting spirit of his Covenanter forbears. He recognised that, at any rate in South Africa, the rift between the High Church party and other denominations was too broad to allow of its being bridged, but among the latter he stood out strongly for closer union. He never ceased to inveigh against that absurd state of things that leads to the presence of two or three churches in a small village, whose total population would not fill one decent-sized building.

On this subject he wrote in 1903, to his staunch fellow-Dissenter, Mr. E. Unwin senior :

“ These distinctions among the non-episcopal churches seem to me out of place in South Africa. Of course the ideal would be to have all English-speaking people acting on a common plan, but we have to leave out the Episcopalians, otherwise it would be much more for the glory of the Master if all the others could act on a mutually concerted system so as not to overlap.

It may seem to you that I am a lukewarm Congregationalist. I think I am more of an Independent than most of you. I believe most fully in a congregation in any given place being quite self-contained, and I have no sympathy whatever with the modern movement in favour of an ‘organised’ Congregationalism. The fact is, the more machinery the less spirituality. I cannot understand the argument that we are losing ground for want of organisation. If the vital power is there we shall grow. If it is not there, all the machinery in the world won't help. But I am not a sectarian. If I lived in a small Colonial town,

say Vryburg, I should protest in the strongest manner against the intrusion of other denominations because the existing church, which happens to be Congregationalist, is more than sufficient for the needs of the English-speaking non-Episcopal inhabitants.

At present there are people of all denominations, even Plymouth Brethren, and they get on well enough, and I hope will do so until the village becomes large enough for another congregation.

If I lived in Mafeking I should take exactly the same position on behalf of the Wesleyans, who for the present are sufficient."

Though an unrelenting foe to all who deliberately practised deceit and oppression, and though detesting the grosser form of evil, he was in no way censorious. While turning away in disgust from those who gratuitously wallowed in mire, he looked with pity on those who struggled, apparently in vain, against besetting sins, being ever ready with charitable excuses for them. It is true his attitude towards some men might seem implacable, almost suggesting the theory that a man once fallen could never rise again ; but such a view would have stultified his whole gospel message as a preacher. While ready to credit men with good intentions where he could, he held that facts speak for themselves, and he could never bring himself to believe that an obviously bad action could be based on a pure motive. In his view confession of sin and the bringing forth of fruits meet for repentance alone justified any hope for the future, and he could put no trust in those who expressed no regrets, but instead brazened out their wrongdoing.

In spite of his fervent godliness, he strongly disapproved of that obtrusive zeal that prompts many good people to scatter seed, as they call it, indiscriminately, regardless of time and place.

Indefatigable labourer in God's vineyard though he was, he could yet write on this subject :

" I am not one of those who can tackle people about their souls ; I cannot find that my Master did it, and I have no faith in it. All that I can do is to try the effect of silent influence. But the silent faith of a man who trusts and serves Christ must have a fountain within, a vital source,

or it will soon dry up; but there is a wise and godly reticence, and there is such a thing as casting your pearls before swine."

As a preacher the burden of his message to his fellow-men may be summed up in the words of the old Hebrew prophet: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

Owing to his Puritan cast of thought it may have appeared to some that his Christianity was of the gloomy kill-joy type. On the contrary, no man enjoyed the innocent pleasures of this beautiful world more than he, and his keen sense of humour enabled him to appreciate to the full its comic side, so long as it was not permitted to intrude on sacred things. If any evidence were needed to prove the essential cheeriness of his nature, it is afforded by the fact that he was beloved of children. Among his papers were found, carefully treasured, scores of letters whose caligraphy and composition reveal the tender years of their writers. They came from every part of Africa where he had lived, worked, or visited, artless yet pathetic tributes, showing that in all his wanderings the old minister left behind him among the lambs of his flocks none but sunny memories.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BLACK MAN'S BURDEN

THE story of Moffat's life from this time onward would be incomplete without some reference to his political activities. He had been at all times a keen student of public affairs, foreign as well as domestic, but only during the last twenty years did circumstances permit of his taking any active part in the political events of his time and country. The position taken up by him in relation to two important episodes in the history of the Colony will be dealt with fully in the two subsequent chapters, but here his general attitude on the native question will chiefly be considered, for to this he mainly devoted himself. Once freed from the trammels of official life, he had ample and unrestricted opportunities for exercising his influence on any cause that appealed to him. That he watched the course of events with a diligent and critical eye is proved by his numerous letters to the Press, or to public men, on questions of the hour. These, if published, would by themselves fill a large volume, which, though it might be of little interest to the general reader, would be invaluable to the historian.

But of the ordinary mind and spirit of the politician he had no trace in his composition, for in what might be called purely secular legislation he took little interest. His views on any particular subject of that kind might be decided enough, but he was content that the will of the majority should prevail in accordance with established usage. But where matters of principle were concerned he was adamant. In such circumstances only these two questions interested him: Did the proposed legislation coincide with the principles of justice, and as a corollary did it conduce to morality?

Unless these questions could be answered in the affirmative, no sophistries and no counsels of expedience were of any avail, and he considered that it was the bounden duty of everyone claiming the name of Christian to declare himself on the side of obvious right. Hence, also, he would refuse to compromise with that strange moral obliquity that prompts men to imagine that one wrong may be legitimately set right by voluntarily committing another.

A signal instance of this is to be found in his hostility to such a Bill as that which was proposed some years ago for rendering illegal marriage between whites and blacks. No one knew better the terrible consequences of miscegenation, evils and resultant cruelty so great as to lay a heavy responsibility upon those who practise it. But the proposed legislation, while doing nothing to prevent the original evil, would only add to the wrongs of those innocent ones who are already called upon to face its penalties, and from a Christian point of view it was founded upon injustice and perverted moral sense.

Similarly he was a warm advocate of all temperance reform, especially in the direction of preventing the sale of intoxicants to natives. He himself had been more or less of an abstainer all his life, but more from habit than principle. During his later years, however, when he began to engage in ministerial work, he found it necessary to take a firm and definite stand on this question. Thus he became a teetotaller, and fought relentlessly against the liquor interest, which holds such a predominating influence in Colonial politics.

Had it ever fallen to his lot to enter Parliament, he could only have done so under the name of an Independent, that often worthy type of Member whose capacities for usefulness are nullified by the combined forces of those who are bound to the chariot-wheels of party.

In casting his electoral vote he cared little for the label by which a man might be distinguished, provided he could be relied upon at all times to support the cause of justice and righteousness.

It was his custom at elections to submit questions on paper to the rival candidates, and according to their replies he would record his vote. In this sense it may be said of him, as an elector, that he believed in men rather than in measures, as is shown by the following

extract from a letter written by him while at Vryburg in 1902 :

“Dr. Jameson and others of his party are here on a political campaign. They are holding a caucus just now and I was asked to attend, but I do not see it. I shall think twice before I wade into the muddy swirl of Colonial party politics. I was importuned to join the Progressives, but I have turned a deaf ear to their charming. There is too much of Jameson and Michell in it. I tell them I am a ‘mugwump,’ which Jameson took the opportunity to expound as a self-righteous person who was not as other men. Well! I look upon abuse from Jameson as rather cheering and invigorating than otherwise.”

From the standpoint of British politics he was a staunch Liberal; in fact, except for the parish pump attitude of the extreme members of that party, he would almost have called himself a Radical. But in South Africa such distinctions have little meaning, for there the cleavage unfortunately runs for the most part on racial lines. In other respects there may be minor issues, but the one subject that unites or divides the opinions of men is the all-important native question. Here, as is so often the case, the extremists in both directions are probably few as compared with the general mass, who are simply apathetic. Unfortunately these latter, when the matter becomes acute, are more easily swayed towards the anti-nigger poll, or else by their indifference they allow it to prevail against numerically weaker forces. Those who stand for justice to the black man are but a handful, and though their efforts are for the most part unavailing, yet their very existence as a party in being puts a check, to a certain extent, on the opposed side, who never feel sure what forces may not be conjured up against them. Consequently they dare not go too far, and at all times have to walk warily.

During the later years of his life Moffat may be said to have been the leader of this small devoted band who are prepared to fight to the last for the lower races in South Africa. Hitherto this cause has never lacked standard-bearers, and in that office he was the lineal successor of men like Philip, Colenso, and Stewart, who in the past have stood in the forefront of the battle.

The race cannot be extinct, though it must sorrowfully be admitted that at the present time no one seems as yet to have stepped forward into the breach to wave once more the fallen banner.

Needless to say, Moffat was dubbed a negrophilist, a word that stinks in the nostrils of the majority of Colonials. But as generally used it is a meaningless term. He had no more, no less love for the black man, *qua* black man, than he had for one of his own colour, though it is certain that he preferred a good nigger to a bad European. He recognised, as every sensible man must, that there are differences between men. He only claimed that all are entitled to the same justice, and that diversities of character are to be determined by features other than the colour of the skin.

Closely related to the native question in South Africa is that of the labour-supply, in fact the two are here practically synonymous; and on this all-important subject Moffat's views were characterised by a common-sense sanity that was refreshing as compared with the vacuous nonsense so often uttered by rabid extremists on both sides. To this Lord Milner himself bore witness. Writing in 1903 in reply to a letter from Moffat he remarks :

"I have only just read your interesting letter. Among the pile of useless communications which I have to wade through every day, it is a great pleasure and an encouragement to occasionally come across one so full of matter. I may say I most cordially agree with you on every point save one, to which I will refer presently. Your letter is of great assistance in confirming, by the experience of a man specially versed on the question, opinions at which I have been gradually arriving myself, and which have now almost crystallised into convictions."

Moffat held no brief for idleness, and practical experience among natives had proved to him that, given the necessary incentive, there is no better workman than the despised nigger; he only preached that what is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander. In the matter of a plentiful indigenous labour-supply South Africa has been well endowed; but far from appreciating or making the best use of their advantages, the white invaders, from sloth and greed, have allowed it to become a source of

evil to themselves, and of injustice to the black man. Two factors are responsible in more or less equal measure for this result, the one a relic of the past, the other a development of later times. The first has sprung from the soil of slavery, which has left its almost indelible influence behind it. As is most natural, it shows itself chiefly among the Dutch, though it tends to spread by contact among those whose birth and training offer less excuse.

From it arises the widely-spread belief that there are two kinds of work, the black man's and the white man's; in other words, that it is the duty of the nigger to toil with his hands under the guidance and supervision of the European, for whom manual labour is regarded as a degradation. This perverted view has been one of the main stumbling-blocks to progress in South Africa, for by the sweat of our brows—whether white or black—shall we alone eat our daily bread.

In this respect there is a noticeable contrast among the agricultural community. The young English or Scotch farmer will be found working "like a nigger" alongside his native boys, the Dutchman much more rarely, and the results as measured by outward signs of prosperity are only what could be expected. Not only do these views prevail among the better educated, more intelligent Dutch, but in their most pronounced form they are found among the squatter class, who live a hand-to-mouth existence content to do anything but work. Naturally, those who are imbued with such ideas resent all attempts at raising the status of the black man, who, given a chance, soon progresses to a higher level than that of his so-called superiors, who prefer to stagnate. Against this demoralising spirit of arrogance and laziness Moffat preached incessantly, and even in his private letters there are frequent allusions to it. Writing on this subject after the Boer War he remarks:

"The 'poor white' problem will be a hard nut to crack; there are thousands and thousands of low-class Boers who are either living upon Government or upon their friends, and are too proud to work for wages, as their English neighbours of the same class are only too glad to do.

I should like to see them reduced to such straits that

they would have to turn to and earn their living by honest labour, and cause their sons and daughters to go and work for a living as Englishmen and Scotchmen have to do. There is an everlasting cant phrase about 'teaching the nigger the dignity of labour'; that is quite misapplied. The nigger does all the hard unskilled labour that is done in South Africa, and does it cheerfully and of his free will—for a consideration—and I cannot for the life of me see why the 'poor white' should not adopt a similar course.

It is no use bolstering up a delusion. For a long time to come there will be many thousands of white men in South Africa, without education, without the training even of artisans, who have the physical qualifications for ordinary labour. They must cease to cherish the dream of a hand-to-mouth, shiftless, almost vegetable existence on a lonely farm in the veld—which could only be made profitable with capital. The industrious part of the community will have burden enough to bear in recouping itself and the Empire for the losses and sacrifices entailed by the war, without the additional drag upon it of a huge pauper class. Once get that class to breast the problem of honest manual labour, and we see them on the road to true manliness and independence, and at the same time we get a valuable answer to the appeal, ever growing louder and more urgent in South Africa, for a better labour-supply."

But as has been said, there is a second factor which has grown up out of the need for labour in mining operations. Unlike the former it is based mainly on cupidity. Diamonds and gold lie below and can be had for the digging. What matter how or by what cruelty they are obtained so long as they are procured? Hence has arisen a similar spirit, differing only in origin, but not in kind or degree, from that which animates the descendants of the slaveholders. The black man as a necessary tool must be kept in his place, in order that jewels and gold may not be lacking.

In this way the Dutch farmer and the company promoter find themselves on a common platform whose strength, buttressed by numbers and financial power, renders it almost invulnerable. Against these combined forces

Moffat waged unceasing war to the end, and of the two he feared the latter more; for avarice is a disease which grows upon what it feeds, whereas the cult of laziness is the result chiefly of ignorance, and is therefore not irremedial. For this reason Moffat in his later years feared the capitalist rather than the Dutchman. It is to him, and others like minded who refused to keep silence, that is due in great measure the amelioration of the black labourer's lot in the mines to-day, as compared with what once it was. He contended that the labour-supply of South Africa would be ample for its needs provided only that steps were taken to conserve and encourage it by fair and decent treatment of the labourer. He strenuously opposed the introduction of the Chinese after the war, not on the score of the ridiculous parrot cry of "Chinese slavery," but because he regarded it as commercially and socially unsound, a view that subsequent history has confirmed. In their ruthless disregard for the lives and well-being of those who toiled in their service, the mining interests seemed intent on killing the goose that procured, if it did not lay, the golden eggs. Whether those who raised their voices in protest would have achieved any tangible results is doubtful, had it not been that the effects of such policy became glaringly manifest, and self-interest began to dictate more humane methods. Referring to this subject in private letters Moffat wrote :

December 22, 1902.

"The native question will be a great problem, because the mining magnates and their school would like to rush the black man. If the people in South Africa did their duty to the natives they would have plenty of labour. Moreover, there are thousands of 'poor whites' who ought to work. If it is right to apply pressure to the natives, why not to these white barbarians?"

August 13, 1906.

"The native question is a sore burden; there is such an evil spirit—the essence of the grossest selfishness. Johannesburg has been what one may call the head centre of this. The native is not a man with human rights. He is a beast, to be used by the white man, and when worn out to be thrown aside; sent to the knacker's yard or

thrown on the rubbish-cart like a dead cat. In Natal there seems to be a conspiracy of silence, but I cannot resist the conclusion that there has been the wildest savagery on our part in putting down a mere local revolt: this revolt was the outcome of gross misgovernment. I only hope that the Natal people will take warning, or one of these days there will be 'hell' in that colony if they do not mend their methods of Native Administration."

In support of his contention that, given proper treatment of the workers, the difficulty of obtaining labour would in great measure disappear, Moffat instanced two cases of which he had intimate knowledge.

In 1903, when representatives of the mining interests were scouring Equatorial Africa in search of fresh recruiting fields for 'boys,' he happened to visit one of the large successful mines in Rhodesia, of which he wrote:

"There is no difficulty whatever about labour here, for decent consideration is shown to the workers. A large part of them have their wives with them and have built good huts. Everything is done in good style, so we have no reason to be ashamed."

Again, the experience of the De Beers Company points the same way, and the Compound System as carried on there met with his warmest approval. Time and again he entered into the lists in defence of this procedure, so closely associated with the name of Cecil Rhodes, who, whatever may have been his motives, deserved in Moffat's opinion the lasting gratitude of thousands of black labourers in South Africa. Both in the Press and upon the platform he was ever ready in this matter to defend the originator of this scheme against the unjustifiable attacks made upon him by ignorant or prejudiced opponents.

In taking up the cause of the natives Moffat often found himself strangely alone, and he deplored the apathy of the Churches, taken as a whole.

Writing from one of his places of sojourn as a minister he remarks:

"Most of the people here, even professed Christians, can

hardly talk ten minutes without girding at the natives for being what they now are, and have been made by them. I think it is the one thing that comes between the people and my ministry: they cannot stand my championship of the natives. According to the local grumblers, there is no one so lazy, so stupid, so uppish, so utterly odious all round as your native servant, especially where he has been under missionary influence. I am accustomed to all this, and listen to it much as a thoughtful and inarticulate parrot would. Well! I am faint but pursuing."

And again:

"I should like to see all Christian men and women in South Africa, including the ministers, making a more determined stand on the native question, which is *the* question for us. God calls his children to testify against the world, not to make friends with it in many ways. We are called to stand against the greedy, selfish spirit which would make our natives a horde of helots to work for the capitalists for all time. It is strange how little support those get who are waging this warfare; the pulpit is dumb; the people are too lazy to think about it. The contest is left to a very few men—not all professed followers of Christ."

Nevertheless, to the end he struggled on in the face of overwhelming odds, doing his share to carry, and to persuade others to carry, the black man's burden. To fight a seemingly losing battle was to him no new experience—looked at superficially, his whole life appeared little else from start to finish. But of the ultimate issue he knew no doubts, and with calm faith he could write:

"I should feel pessimistic about our outlook as a nation but for the conviction that we have a destiny marked out for us by a Higher Will and Power than our own, and we have so far fulfilled that destiny, in spite of abuses in our civil and military administrations in the past, even more astounding than those we see now."

¶ He and his companions on the side of "justice for the nigger" might seem, like the small garrison of an outpost,

marked out for lost endeavour and destruction. For them the hard-fought day might spell defeat; but far behind—at least so he trusted—lay the invincible forces which in time should “possess the field.”

If one well-worn saying more frequently than another fell from his lips it was this :

“The mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small,
And though He wait with patience, yet with exactness grinds He all.”

CHAPTER XXVII

MOWBRAY, 1896-1902

IN July 1896 Moffat, out of harness, left Taungs and joined his wife in Cape Town. He had just turned sixty-one, and though in a sense going into retirement, the word is neither appropriate nor applicable; twenty years of active work still lay before him, and, strictly speaking, only the last two years of his life can be described as having been passed in anything suggestive of inactivity. Until the matter of his pension had been decided he could make no plans for the future, and an unseemly delay occurred while the Imperial and Colonial Governments wrangled among themselves concerning the amount and the source from which it should be extracted. Eventually a grateful country estimated its obligations towards him as equivalent to a retiring allowance of £188 per annum.

Thus provided for, if so it can be called, Moffat settled down at Mowbray, a Cape Town suburb, where for the next six years he found a home. The family by this time had scattered each to his or her own place, but the little cottage at Mowbray where the old folks dwelt became the centre of that circle whose circumference the years had now so widened.

Each of its members (apart from those who lived in close proximity) in due season turned towards it as the Mecca of their pilgrimages, and it thus fell to Moffat that the long-cherished dream was at last fulfilled; for after years of separation, toil, and anxiety he was permitted to spend a few quiet years with his wife before death came to end a hallowed partnership.

The enforced idleness, however, soon began to chafe upon him, so long accustomed as he had been to regular occupation. What made it harder to bear was the

knowledge that he still had it in him to do good useful work, and it was difficult for him to sit quiet while injustice was being perpetrated in matters concerning which no man knew or could judge better. More than once he took upon himself to offer protest or advice unasked to those in authority; in return he received nothing more than chilly snubs, which were evidently intended to remind him that he was now only a private person whose opinion they neither valued nor desired. Perhaps the lesson was needed, for, however reluctantly, he had to face the fact that his day had passed. Writing at this time, he gives a pen-picture of his quiet days at Mowbray, the homely details of which—with a touch of unconscious pathos—show the active man trying as best he can to reconcile himself to inactivity.

“For an idle man time is pretty well filled up. I try to devote the forenoon to systematic study of some kind, if perchance I may catch up a little of the leeway that I have lost, for I find myself a little behind the world of my acquaintance in general mental culture. In the afternoons there is always somebody to see or something to go out for; in the evening I am often too tired for anything more serious than chess or Halmah. I sometimes coax the mother to a game of the former—she sniffs at the latter, for you know how conservative she is.”

In January 1897 he writes to his sister Jane Moffat :

“Your letter was welcome. You are, however, expending more regret upon me than I am upon myself in the matter of pension. I have the conviction, which carries with it a sweetening element, that I am paying the penalty for not being compliant enough to the powers that be, and that is a far happier feeling than I should have if I were rich by condoning the evil which I have been compelled to witness but in which I had no part.

My chief trial has been the inability to set wrong right, but the powers of evil are terribly strong, and God sees just at present to allow them full swing. It is a curious feeling that you refer to, to be sitting here an almost unknown onlooker, when matters are being dealt with as if there were no such person as I in existence, and to go about as quite a private person, just recognised by a few old faithful

friends and no more, after being the principal person and at the beginning and end of everything. But this change does not trouble me at all, for the heavy load of responsibility is gone too, and I am not haunted by a spectre which used to present itself at all hours and sometimes even wake me out of sleep.

We have quite settled down, happily suited in the matter of house and servant, and we have some of the old heirlooms about us. I am writing at my father's study table and seated on his chair; the 'voor-huis' (front room) clock is in the dining-room with its silvery chimes, and the sofa attracts the notice of visitors by its old-world quaintness—I should not wonder if it sets a fashion. These are relics of Kuruman, and we have one or two bits of the Inyati life as well.

It is pleasant to sit on the verandah and see the trains rushing to and fro, and beyond there is the white and green of the Cape Flats and the long waving line of hills over Stellenbosch and Wellington; and no man to make me afraid with some official wrong.

I should like to have some little work to do so as not to feel wholly useless, but that will come in God's own time."

Even as he penned these words the occupation for which he longed, though not of the kind that he would have chosen, was being prepared for him, and he soon had scope enough for the exercise of his energies. It may be recalled that, in one of his letters from Taungs, he remarked that some villains had been attempting to get up a scare in Bechwanaland, but that it was "really too thin." When he left there in July 1896 peace and quietness reigned, not a cloud on the horizon. Within six months the flames of rebellion were spreading far and wide.

The history of this outbreak is a melancholy and disgraceful one, and without a shadow of doubt it would not have had to be written if Moffat had been at Taungs. The trouble originated in what was known as the Phokwane Native Reserve, not far from Taungs.

Its exciting cause was the enforcement of the rinderpest regulations, the immediate one the stupid blundering, to use no stronger word, on the part of those who had to handle the business.

An unprejudiced authority who lived near, and had the

advantage of inside information, gave it as his opinion that the rising ought never to have taken place, and that it was caused entirely by the high-handed action of the police. Hostilities having broken out, the natives spoiled their case by acts of violence, and then, having been severely punished in a one-sided sort of fight, they fled for refuge to the Long Mountains west of Kuruman. Here lived two small kindred tribes who it is certain had not the slightest desire to be mixed up in the business, but the military operations were conducted in such a callous, indiscriminating way that all the people in this district were soon involved in the common ruin. One of the local chiefs, Luka, driven into arms, fought bravely and with a few devoted adherents died game, falling like a true patriot "with his feet to the field and his face to the foe."

This finished the affair, and the survivors surrendered in a body, whereupon the Cape Government were guilty of a shameful deed.

The whole tract of country belonging to the tribes implicated was declared forfeit; a few of the ringleaders were tried and sentenced, in a curiously perfunctory manner, to varying terms of imprisonment; the remainder, the rank and file, were transported to Cape Town, men, women, and children to the number of 1,896, and were there distributed among the farmers of the Western Province as indentured servants and labourers for a term of five years!

Protests followed from a certain section in the Colony, headed, it need hardly be said, by Moffat, and the matter having been ventilated in England, some pressure was brought to bear upon the Colonial Office; but the Cape Government had some specious arguments with which to throw dust into the eyes of the former. They contended that, as the land and stock of these people had been confiscated, they would necessarily have starved, and much was made of the fact that they had had their choice of imprisonment or exile, and had chosen the latter. The transaction was in reality on a par with that of a thief who empties a man's pocket and then proceeds to give him back a shilling for his next dinner, while the alternative that had been offered represented a compounding of felony, even granting that the ignorant wretches understood the matter, which is very doubtful. They were either innocent or guilty, and if the latter, common justice demanded that

they should have a fair trial. The iniquity of the whole proceeding roused Moffat's fighting blood, and he speedily became immersed in a contest, fruitless though it proved to be. Two young men among the prisoners refused to accept the conditions of indenture and were promptly arrested. By way of testing the legality of the Government's action, Moffat arranged to fight their cause in the Law Courts, relying upon hoped-for assistance, in the matter of funds, from friends in South Africa and England.

After a strange delay the preliminary examination was held, whereupon the law officers apparently advised that the charges should be withdrawn and the two men were liberated. It was evident that the authorities feared the issue, thus confessing that their action had been *ultra vires*.

But nothing more could be done, and the Government, supported by its legislature, went on its way unblushingly, and the name of the Premier, Sir Gordon Sprigg, will go down to posterity linked with two political crimes—the Basuto War of 1880, and the treatment of the Bechwana rebels in 1897.

Meanwhile in England the great Liberal Party, which a few years later would lash itself into hysterical transports over "Chinese slavery," to the tune of which political war-cry it sailed into power, was dumb; the fate of a few wretched niggers had no vote-catching power. Owing to representations made in England by the Aborigines Protection Society, the Cape Government promised to appoint an inspector to watch the interests of these serfs, but what a sorry farce this at first proved Moffat tells in his own letters.

Having done all he could, his connection with these Bechwana prisoners might have gone no farther, but a new development took place. The London Missionary Society asked him whether he would undertake the duty of ministering to the spiritual needs of these poor people, who in the absence of any encouragement might have been tempted, like the exiles of old, to hang their "harps on the willows" and abandon themselves to despair. To this request he assented, though with some reluctance, knowing how harrowing and difficult the position would be. Permission had to be obtained from the Government, and the Premier, aware of Moffat's views, would have been glad to refuse it but dared not. Thus for the next five years Moffat acted as an honorary chaplain to this scattered flock. Having

no official position or influence, he could do little for them materially, but it must nevertheless have been some comfort to them to see a friendly face and to meet one who could speak to them in their own tongue. The following extracts from Moffat's letters deal with this subject :

January 10, 1897.

“ It seems as if we never can tell what to expect next, but the latest in South Africa is a row, of all places in the world, in the Taungs District, not at Taungs itself but at Phokwane, about fifteen miles away. How in the name of all that is absurd they have managed to get to blows with those wretched Batlapin I know not. Mr. Good and I, who may claim to know something about Bechwanas, are unable to understand it except as the result of the pugnacious spirit on our side, and the practice of sending a lot of policemen, who are spoiling for a fight, to do something which ought to be done by some one man with an ordinary share of common sense, sent unarmed to get into touch with the disaffected people and to find out what is the matter. Be that as it may, the history of the affair at Phokwane is that, after a preliminary skirmish in which a couple of our men got wounded, there was a so-called fight in which our braves claim to have killed more than a hundred victims without so much as a scratch on their side. It is indeed a perfect enigma how these natives will persist in the wretched folly of trying to fight Europeans, and then to make matters worse they go and put themselves in the wrong by murdering three unlucky traders who had been unable to get away. They had at least one bit of good sense, and that was to let the women and children go away first. The chief Galishewe is in hiding nobody knows where at present.”

April 3, 1897.

“ The Cape Government is making a rare mess of it in Bechwanaland. Galishewe, the petty chief at Phokwane, was allowed to escape to the Long Mountains. A large force of volunteers has gone to capture him, but they are apparently acting with their usual want of discrimination and lumping up all the Bechwanas—rebel and loyal—instead of making it a point to keep them distinct and to show that they are only looking for the rebels. I suppose

the end of it will be a wholesale confiscation of land, an object always in view with a certain section of Colonists."

September 30, 1897.

"We have been in the thick of the Langeberg question. I am now going in for a test case in the Supreme Court. It will cost some money, but I am going to appeal to friends in England to back me. I felt very much alone in the earlier stages of the struggle, but as time goes on, and the subject is more ventilated, it looks as if there will be a rally of those who believe in justice for the nigger; and even if there should be no direct success this time, yet the agitation may be a check in the future, and a little public opinion may be roused."

December 1, 1897.

"The 'test case,' as people call it, has ended in the complete failure of the Government to prove anything against my clients, and they have in consequence been liberated, so that in their case at least justice has been done. But it will not make any difference to others, for the attitude of the Government is one of stolid indifference to any outside agitation. It is secure in its majority, which, being Dutch, will back it up in anything that means keeping the black man under. People out here are for the most part entirely indifferent, and it will be a slow and tedious battle. Still, it has to be fought and there is no going back. Mrs. Hepburn deserves a great deal of credit for her persistent energy. She works in her own way, which is not mine, but we are going in the same direction."

December 11, 1897.

"The climax of the whole business is the appointment of old Mr. Innes as Inspector of Indentured Prisoners. He does not understand a word of their language, is over seventy years old, and in indifferent health. The thing is a farce, and could only be possible under such a Government as that with which we are now afflicted. The only gleam of hope is that it is so utterly bad it can hardly survive another session."

December 31, 1897.

"Here we are at the end of 1897. It has been a distressful year so far as Bechwanaland is concerned. The utter inability to exercise any force in defence of our old friends,

for words seem to have lost any force either to make the Government feel or to arouse the consciences of Christian people. It has been like the wind moaning in the reeds and no more. I pity Sir Gordon Sprigg. He must be an unhappy man, for he must know that he is in the wrong, and yet he goes on under the pressure of political expediency, for he is a mere opportunist and will do anything to keep in office. As to his colleagues, we cannot expect anything better from such.

The expenses involved in the defence of the two men only came to forty-odd pounds, for only one of the lawyers would take anything, and the amount, including my fare to Vryburg, was cheerfully subscribed on the spot. It is better to utilise and develop what little interest and co-operation can be found here, but the money subscribed in England will be useful to be kept in hand as a fighting fund. Except for Mrs. Hepburn, there is hardly anyone to take a very active interest, though many approve and are willing to help with money or encouragement. I am, however, amazed at the general attitude of the Churches. The Dutch Reformed, as a matter of course, is unsympathetic."

January 11, 1898.

"The Government have carried their policy through in spite of all protests. From their point of view no doubt they are right, for they have the support of the majority, and that to them is justification. It keeps them in power, but the right and the wrong of the case do not seem to occur to them for a moment."

April 1, 1898.

"I have been asked by Wardlaw Thompson, Secretary of the London Missionary Society, to undertake the religious oversight of the indentured Bechwana. I cannot turn away from so obvious a duty. There will be many unpleasant passages of arms as a necessary result, but these will have to be taken as they come. The Premier is not very pleased, but I suppose he could hardly venture to refuse outright, and he has had to accede to Mr. Thompson's request. I am sceptical how the thing will work; the Bechwana will doubtless be glad to see me, and will pour into my ears a flood of complaints which I cannot remedy, and when I am obliged to speak it will be to unwilling ears

so far as Government is concerned, but I must tackle each day as it comes."

June 28, 1898.

"My time is now fully occupied. There is opposition in some quarters, that goes without saying; but many of the masters are quite pleased to see me, so I must pass over the others for the present.

I spent last week at the Paarl, and finished up with a Sunday on which I had two services: one in a Dutch Reform school-room on a farm in Yosfat's Daal within sight of the spot where I said good-bye to our mother fifty years ago; the other in an Anglican church in Kleyn Drachenstein. The clergyman and his family were present to show their sympathy—I had upwards of thirty each time in spite of its being a pouring wet day.

Poor souls! They were so thankful, and did their best to sing the songs of Zion in a strange land. I let them choose the first hymn, and they turned at once to 'Utlwañ cona dilelelo tse ditlañ mo diphepoñ' ('Hark! what sounds are these of lamentations, borne to us upon the breeze?').

Some of the farmers are as nice as can be. One old farmer said to me, 'I was quite astounded when these people came. We thought they were wild savages, and we find some of them far better than our coloured people here.' Yea, verily, I think some of them will go into the Kingdom of Heaven before us. I made a distribution of books to those who could read; few had any, for they had lost everything in the war.

I am trying to establish centres where, on notice being given, I can meet them on Sundays and thus save long expensive rounds."

August 27, 1898.

"I am visiting the centres once every three months, and it is certainly a little encouragement that they should see one of their old teachers now and then; otherwise it does not amount to much. Many of the masters are kind in their way, in fact there is such a dearth of labour-supply in the Western Province that I notice an extreme anxiety on the part of the farmers to conciliate these people and to keep them. But there is the taint of slavery about it all. It is compulsory service, and the bondage galls them and makes them discontented and complaining."

March 19, 1899.

“ I am on my travels and am writing from Stellenbosch. There is a Dutchman a little way out who gives me the use of a school-room on his farm, and the natives assemble there. They came together to-day to the number of above a hundred, and I had service morning and afternoon. During the week they are practically inaccessible, being scattered about. The pinch of the thing is that I am not able to do anything in the way of redressing their wrongs. The inspection by a Government officer is a sham and dead letter. It is now a year and a half since these people were indentured, and there has only been one round of inspection, and even that was carried out in a perfunctory manner.”

May 6, 1899.

“ I am writing at Worcester. I came last night for a day's work here to-morrow both for the natives and for the English congregation, which latter is without a minister at present. This is an unsatisfactory district. The farmers seem to be a rougher sort and the people have largely scooted, and then the farmers put the blame on me, for, as they have it, inciting the people to go ; but this is the way of the world.”

June 10, 1899.

“ There is much sickness amongst the Bechwana. Two have died here [Stellenbosch] this week ; the damp winter does not suit them. I am glad to say the present Premier, Mr. Schreiner, has sent for the Inspector of Natives in Bechwanaland to come and make a round and report. The man in question, Mr. St. Quintin, knows the people and their language, and the inspection will not be a farce as it was under Sprigg's administration. There is a great deal that needs looking into in their condition.”

Moffat continued to minister to these people until the expiration of their indentures. By that time more serious matters still were occupying public attention, and in the turmoil of war they had been almost forgotten.

Some died, others drifted away and were lost sight of, and concerning the exact number eventually repatriated the writer has found no definite information. Thus ended

this sorry story. When the treatment meted out to the Dutch rebels during the Transvaal War, and in 1915, is called to mind, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the proud boast, that under the British flag the law is no respecter of persons, is, at any rate in South Africa, only a form of words and nothing more.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE TRANSVAAL WAR, 1899-1902

DURING the period dealt with in the previous chapter Moffat had not in other ways been idle. He had ample opportunity for following the course of political events with a keen and critical eye, and whether in the pulpit or the Press he zealously used his influence in endeavouring to guide popular opinion into what he considered right channels. Many of his private letters contain common-sense remarks upon men and matters of the hour, and apart from their intrinsic value, they throw light on his character; for this reason extracts from them may legitimately find a place here.

August 1896.

“ Things seem to be settling down in South Africa. The Jameson trial (in England) has ended much as might have been expected, but I think the capitalists got off very easily; and as to the Parliamentary inquiry, that seems to be degenerating into a farce, but here opinion is divided. So many men owe their prosperity to causes connected with the policy of the Chartered Company, whose influence seems to be wonderfully strong.

I do not know how the Johannesburg difficulty is to end. It will require a wise man at Pretoria. There ought, of course, to be a peaceful solution, but unfortunately the Hollanders seem bent on mischief. They are the difficulty—I don't think Paul Kruger or the bulk of the Boers are unreasonable. Of course, Dr. Jameson has given us away terribly, and it will be years before we can get over it.”

January 1897.

“ Cape Town has been standing on its head over the visit of Mr. Rhodes (on his return from England after the inquiry on the Jameson Raid), but I hope is calming down.

It has been thought fit to make a demonstration, addresses, etc. The pretext has been a desire professed to show Rhodes honour for the great work he has done in the north, without any reference to the Jameson Raid. But to fête Rhodes at the present moment is to condone the raid, and cannot but be offensive to our neighbours at Pretoria, with whom it is our duty to get a better understanding. It is felt that these demonstrations are intended to influence the Parliamentary Commission and are in bad taste; they at least prove that extension northwards will win the approval of the mob, whatever unscrupulous means may have been adopted to secure it. Epithets of an uncomplimentary nature have been hurled in plenty at those who stood aloof.

Rhodes himself spoke with a fair amount of reticence and good taste. Poor man! I am sorry he had not the resolution to refuse all demonstration."

April 1897.

"Parliament opened yesterday; things are somewhat tempestuous. We are still in the ground swell of the storm that was raised by the Jameson Raid, and it will be a long while before we are done with the results of that wretched business; it has upset so thoroughly the relations of the Dutch and English in South Africa, and has given a pretext to those who are hostile to Great Britain in the Transvaal. I hope the new Governor (Sir Alfred Milner) will be out soon, for we sadly need an able-handed man at the helm. There is a Jingo party which is making itself very noisy and, though it professes to be quite peaceful, is pushing things on to war as fast as it can. The Transvaal Government is no doubt most irritating, but if we can only bear with it long enough, there are elements of weakness within which must assert themselves. There are lines of cleavage in the Transvaal itself. Every move towards outside interference tends to close up the ranks and to unite the Boers against us. The more we leave them to their own devices, the more those cracks open again, and would eventually result in a radical upheaval and change in which the Uitlanders would have their opportunity."

May 1897.

"This afternoon Sir Gordon Sprigg embarks for England as Colonial Premier, going home for the Royal festivities.

He is leaving things in a curious coil here. The behaviour of some of his ministers leaves much to be desired. There was a scene in the House yesterday which has made even the *Cape Times* raise a voice of protest. Faure (a Dutchman) is not a bad old chap, in fact he is by far the most manly and consistent of the crowd, but they are a scratch lot; but whom have we to replace them if they were turned out. The new Governor is still feeling his way. His antecedents are promising, and I trust we shall see better things soon. Poor Lord Rosmead! It was an evil day for himself when he was induced to come out as Rhodes' nominee. The latter is quiet. Now that the demonstrations are over, the demonstrators are beginning to find their level. The Dutch have forsworn Rhodes; they will have none of him. He has only spoken once in the House, yesterday in favour of the Bechwanaland Confiscation Bill. I wrote a letter to the *Cape Times* on the subject, but do not know if they will put it in."

September 1897.

"I have been away for ten days to Johannesburg and Pretoria. Things appear to be going badly in the city of gold. The heavy pressure of taxation is telling on the weaker companies, and there is a shrinkage of business which tells all round. Hundreds of Boers have been impoverished by the rinderpest and are swelling the pauper class, who are being fed and assisted by the State out of taxes which the Uitlander pays. This is a state of affairs which will not work long, especially since the Boer Government, with all its enormous revenue, is getting in sight of money difficulties."

January 1898.

"The Presidential Election is on in the Transvaal. There are great differences of opinion as to the respective chances of old Paul and Burger. If Paul gets in again it will be the ruin of him. He can't stand another term, and he will have a big smash. I think that is about as certain as anything can be to the human mind."

A wonderfully accurate forecast.

April 1898.

"I have never seen a more unsatisfactory lot of men than our present Ministry. It seems as if, in our very

destitution, we shall have to fall back on Rhodes. I wish I could have faith in him, but I cannot. I fear some awful crash to end up with, and yet he is the only man worth the name of statesman in South Africa; the others are only politicians, and poor ones at that."

The above extract, together with the following written in 1900, shows how fairly Moffat could speak even of an antagonist :

"Mr. Rhodes has been in England, but is on his way out. The way his enemies rave at him is maniacal, they seem unable to see anything else; it is all Rhodes from beginning to end with them. Much as I disapprove of him as a political force in this country, I do think he deserves fair play."

May 1898.

"Sir Alfred Milner seems to have been sent out to work a policy of steady conciliation towards the Dutch in general and the Transvaal in particular. Probably this is sound common sense, and if we can only put up with their cheek—and it is cheek—time is on our side and we are bound to win; to win, that is to say, in gradually assimilating the Dutch and converting them into one of the ingredients of a wholesome and solid South Africa. It is a little hard to put up with the adoration which many people in England bestow upon Paul Kruger and his sort. He is doing his best to disenchant his admirers, and I think this term of Presidency upon which he has entered will do for him."

July 1898.

"Cape politics are in a state of fermentation. Rhodes is the only strong man we have, and he would be preferable to that deplorable Sprigg; but I cannot get over my distrust not only of him, but of his associates who are re-appearing. With them in the Cape Parliament it looks like a return to the old order of rascality."

August 1898.

"We are in the middle of a long General Election. It is a case of Progressives versus Bond, which means roughly English and Dutch, though there are some of each on both sides. The Progressives are for the most part Rhodites,

So you see to what straits we are reduced. It remains to be seen if Rhodes has learnt any lessons from his past mistakes, and whether he will stick to his former 'henchmen.' No one seems to have a policy, unless black-guarding your opponents can be called a policy. His is more statesmanlike than that of anyone else. We have such a collection of muffs in the Assembly that they will go down like ninepins before his personal ascendancy."

In the end it was Mr. Schreiner who became Premier, and in May 1899 Moffat wrote :

"Take it all round, the Schreiner Ministry is an improvement on the Sprigg crowd, and has seemingly something to say for itself."

In October 1898 Moffat and his wife left on a short visit to England, returning in January 1899. During his absence the Rev. Mr. Good, another retired missionary, carried on his work among the Bechwana prisoners.

South African politics by this time were beginning to show ominous signs of overcharge in the matter of racial feeling, and the murmur of possible approaching storm sounded plainly, but ominously, in discerning ears. Writing in May 1899 Moffat notes :

"The people who call themselves Progressives out here seem to be more intent at present on getting up a row with the Transvaal than upon anything else. I hope they will not succeed, for the Transvaal is going steadily on in the direction of cooking its own goose if we will but leave it alone."

Again in June :

"There is a good deal of unrest in South Africa, but I really do not see what there is to go to war about, if the Boers do not commit some act of hostility, and they have not done that yet. If we could only leave them alone, things in the Transvaal are going fast enough in the right direction. The Kruger Administration is so rotten that it must eventually collapse, and then there will be a chance of reform from within and there can be no outcry against British interference.

There is the usual flood of silly talk on both sides, but I think Schreiner is equal to the strain and may be trusted

to advise the Governor wisely. He (the Governor) held his own well at the Conference; possibly he is a shade too anxious, or has been, at some stages of the business to press matters. One can hardly wonder at it."

If any evidence was required, these extracts from Moffat's correspondence prove that he was no fire-breathing Jingo. Up to the very eve of the catastrophe he hoped and prayed for peace, and threw the whole weight of his influence into the scale in order to secure it. No man hated war more, and no man was more convinced that in this particular instance it was both unnecessary and undesirable. Students of history will recall that the then Premier, Mr. Schreiner, brought upon himself much disfavour by what was regarded as his too pacific attitude. That Moffat supported him is shown by the following letters :

MOWBRAY,
July 11, 1899.

MY DEAR MR. SCHREINER,

You must pardon my presumption as a not very eminent individual in expressing an opinion on political matters; but I write as one probably representing a considerable number of others who do not care to appear in the papers unless they sign their own names, and are not prepared to court the publicity which that involves. I wish to thank you very heartily for your declaration that, in your opinion, there is no call for the active interference of the British Government in the Transvaal under present circumstances. I hope you will have courage given you to maintain that position in spite of the strong feeling evoked amongst those who hold warlike views.

I personally have no reason to love the Boers, and moreover I cannot quite follow you in your expressed satisfaction with the terms now offered by the President and ratified by the Volksraad, for I must confess that the past does not reassure me as to the President's good faith.

But the proposal, unsatisfactory as it may be, gives the Colonial Office a chance of gracefully accepting the terms, and avoiding, even if it be only for a time, so grave a misfortune as war.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

J. S. MOFFAT.

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, CAPE TOWN,
July 13, 1899.

MY DEAR MR. MOFFAT,

This is just a line to thank you for your appreciation of my efforts in the cause of Peace. The sympathy of such men as yourself is specially valued—perhaps the more because it is rarely expressed. A great responsibility may lie at the door of those who by silence allow the will of those who seek war to speak for them.

Yours very truly,

W. P. SCHREINER.

But when in the end the Boer Republic threw down the gauntlet, Moffat saw plainly that only one course lay before his country and loyally supported her cause. Idealist though he was, he remembered, what so many often forget, that the administration of law for the punishment or curbing of evil-doers rests in the last resource upon force, and that those who administer it do not bear the sword in vain, but must be a terror to evil-doers, a principle that applies to nations as well as individuals.

Perhaps no man living at the time had a deeper knowledge of the real causes that had led up to this conflict, and he well knew that, though there may have been mistakes on the British side, the Boers, having sown the wind, were reaping the whirlwind. Moreover, he realised that this, like the last great war, was no mere struggle between different nationalities, but rather the clash resulting from the impact of two diametrically opposed ideals. That there were minor influences that helped to swell the stream none can deny, but to look upon these as the chief or only cause is only possible to those who wilfully shut their eyes to the stern logic of facts. It is the deep broad current, fed no doubt by far-off mountain rills, that causes the roaring waterfall, not the tiny tributaries that may empty themselves into it just before the final leap. These latter may add their quota, but in themselves they would effect but little. Similarly, with both these wars Moffat recognised their inevitableness once matters had proceeded to a certain point. The position in South Africa might be likened to that of two adjacent reservoirs, the one fed by the clear streams of progress, the other and smaller by the fetid springs of reaction. It might have been possible slowly

and safely to transfer the waters of the former through that of the latter, and thus by gradual assimilation to neutralise its baleful qualities. But once the flood-gates were opened between them, blind force alone could prevail. It was in this way that Moffat regarded the struggle; an appeal had been made to the sword and the sword must decide, much as he regretted the awful choice. Though as a pacifist he supported Mr. Schreiner in his endeavours to preserve peace, he could yet logically and conscientiously join those who rallied round him, whose hand was at the helm during this trying period. That he sympathised with Sir Alfred Milner (now Viscount Milner), and that he resented the unscrupulous attacks made upon him, is shown by the following letter :

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, CAPE TOWN,
February 3, 1900.

DEAR MR. MOFFAT,

Very many thanks for your kind letter. I need all the prayers of honest and loyal men, not for myself, who care not a jot for the personal side of the matter, but for the cause of which I am the champion. It is not against myself, but against our country, that these attacks are really directed. I know you have not agreed with my policy—I value the more your sympathy and support at a time when it is no longer a question of the greater or lesser seriousness of Uitlander grievances, but of the preservation of British influence and civilisation in South Africa.

I have every confidence in the ultimate triumph of our cause, but the days are dark and the pressure of a friendly hand most welcome.

Yours very truly,
A. MILNER.

Moffat's attitude was widely criticised and condemned, not only in South Africa by supporters of the Boer cause, but in England by those well-meaning people who in their ignorance are ever ready to be guided by pure sentiment when it involves no personal sacrifice or inconvenience to themselves. Many of these, knowing nothing of South African history nor politics, expressed indignant surprise that a man of his profession and antecedents should support what they considered an unholy, unjust war.

He knew better that the time had come when it must be settled once for all, not who should rule in South Africa, but which of two ideals must prevail, and for himself there could be no shadow of doubt which of them was more worthy of his support.

Remembering former things, South Africans feared lest, having put her hand to the plough, Great Britain might again look back, and a Vigilance Committee was therefore formed with the object of carrying on propaganda for the enlightenment of public opinion at home and abroad, in particular on the true merits of the case. This Moffat joined, and as a committeeman endeavoured to assist his country's cause.

But the bloodshed and horror of it all weighed on him like a nightmare. His one desire was that loss of life should be minimised as far as possible, and for this reason the slowness of the campaign did not worry him, feeling sure as he did that time was on the British side.

January 2, 1900.

"The war is not coming to so early an end as some of us hoped, for our generals do not appear to have been quite up to their work, or else they are purchasing experience at a very dear rate.

It is wonderful what a lot of men there are, yet it seems difficult to know where they are. A good many seem to be spread about the Colony to support the somewhat weak-kneed loyalty of the Cape Dutch."

January 21, 1900.

"The campaign is going but slowly. If the beleaguered places were only relieved I should not mind how slowly, for we could then just tire out the Boers and save many valuable lives. They are surpassing the expectations of most people in their power of resistance, but happily Great Britain, in fact Greater Britain, goes solidly for finishing the war thoroughly. It is just as well we did not have it all our own way at first. We went into the thing in a cocksure and somewhat unbecoming spirit, and we are being humbled and abased."

September 8, 1900.

"I am off to England again next week, this time as one of four delegates from the Vigilance Association of South

Africa. Two of my colleagues are M.P.s and cannot leave at once, but it is proposed that Mr. Theo, Schreiner and I should lose no time, as our presence is to be desired during the elections which may come off in October."

R.M.S. "SCOT,"

December 9, 1900.

"You see I have not stayed in England longer than I could help. The pace was too rapid altogether to suit me, and we had done all we could in enlightening the public mind on the Transvaal question. The great mass of the people are strong enough in the British view. It is only a few extremists who pose as pro-Boers. Those with whom I had the opportunity of conversing are apparently dominated by a furious hatred of Mr. Chamberlain, and you would think, from hearing them talk, that they had a supernatural power of reading his thoughts and motives. They always fall back on motives when they cannot find anything else to pitch at a man. If you cannot prove that a man has done anything wrong, you are pretty safe in asserting that he at all events meant to; that is about all that I find the pro-Boer arguments come to. The business is getting very wearisome and tedious now. I wonder what good De Wet and his crowd hope to do by the course he is now pursuing. I do not know if we are right in calling it either heroism or patriotism."

September 2, 1901.

"They are trying to get martial law extended to the sea ports, but I hope they will not succeed, for some of the officers act very high-handedly and embitter people who are not quite loyal, but I quite agree with keeping out undesirables. We have enough of them already, and they do much harm persuading the wretchedly ignorant Boers to go on with the opposition, which, while certainly inconvenient to us, is utterly ruining them."

To Mr. Edward Unwin senior

October 30, 1901.

"Livingstone [his eldest son] had a visitation on his farm [in the Colony] of 200 Transvaalers the other day. Their commandant was a good sort and they did no wanton damage—only taking every vestige of food and

clothing they could lay their hands on, and leaving thirteen tired horses.

One comfort, they cannot stop long anywhere, being kept constantly on the run. The general testimony is that Transvaalers behave decently, it is our own rebels whose conduct is so intolerable, and yet these are the men for whom Clifford & Co. would have a general amnesty. Fortunately rebellion is daily growing less fashionable now that courts martial have taken the place of the Treason Protection Act.

I hear that ——— arrived in the *Kinfauns Castle* yesterday; I hope she may be told to go back to the place from which she came. We cannot afford to have folks like her cavorting round in a country where every tenth man is a possible traitor and only wants encouragement, such as she and her kind give. You do not let a child play with fire in a powder magazine. But you people in England cannot enter into our feelings about this matter."

Moffat, like all those with British sympathies in South Africa, felt acutely the injustice of the charges brought against the soldiers on the score of bad behaviour and atrocities, and writing in February 1902 on this subject he says:

"There has been a widespread protest against the 'campaign of calumny.' The calumnies themselves are too ridiculous for anything, but we feel that it is due to the 'Tommies' and to their friends to raise our voices, for it is disheartening to the men who have behaved so well to hear themselves put in such a false light."

Regarding these and the distorted exaggerated stories concerning the Concentration Camps, which were manufactured by the Boers and glibly repeated and believed by a certain section in England, they roused his righteous indignation. The record of his life hitherto ought to be sufficient to prove that he would have been the last man to condone any real wrongs or evil practices of this kind, and, being on the spot, he had far better opportunities of coming to a correct conclusion than hysterical sentimentalists six thousand miles away. Concerning the Concentration

Camps he was in a position to obtain first-hand information; while it cannot be denied that in their early stages there was a regrettable mortality among their occupants, it is equally true that, had the military authorities not adopted some such plan, that mortality would have been multiplied a thousandfold. One incident in this connection is perhaps worth recording, the story of which the writer heard from Moffat's own lips.

One of the religious bodies in England (the Society of Friends, if memory can be trusted) sent out a lady delegate to obtain first-hand information concerning the alleged horrors of the Concentration Camps. The military people gave her free access, and she visited several, entering them on exactly the same conditions as the Boer women themselves; she received the same accommodation, drew the ordinary rations, and mixed with the other occupants without any restrictions whatever.

On her return, while passing through Cape Town, she met Moffat, and in answer to his inquiry concerning what she had seen and heard she remarked, "Mr. Moffat, I am proud of my country."

From a military point of view it may have been a mistake, for the knowledge that their wives and children were being cared for left the Burghers free, so that in a sense it may be said that "it was magnificent, but it was not war."

Referring to the falsehoods and misrepresentations that became such an odious feature in this campaign of calumny, Moffat writes scathingly in a letter to Mr. Edward Unwin :

September 10, 1901.

"With reference to the copy of the *Daily News*, the column headed 'Among the Churches' with the initials P. W. W. takes the cake. No wonder the man has not the face to put his full name. I could put my finger on a dozen things, but will just mention one: he says 'Another Presbyterian, Mr. David Russell, prayed publicly that God would exterminate the Boers.'

I should need a great deal better authority than that of P. W. W. for such a statement as that. I could not conceive of such a prayer on the Rev. David Russell's lips, either 'publicly' or privately. He is one of the gentlest spirited men I ever knew.

As to that extraordinary word 'exterminate,' which we hear so often in this connection, it is not used by the loyal people in South Africa. We have no wish to see anybody exterminated. The British Government is at this moment feeding and sheltering close upon a hundred thousand Boers—men, women, and children—to save them from 'extermination,' which would otherwise have been the consequence of the insensate folly of their leaders. We are sorry for the ruin that the Boers are bringing upon themselves, but the men who are responsible for this are the men who persist in carrying on a guerilla warfare. Great Britain cannot shirk her responsibilities; she must go on now till there is an end to this sort of thing."

In due course the long dreary struggle came to its appointed end, and on June 8, 1902, Moffat writes :

"You will have heard that peace has been declared. The terms are satisfactory; the great thing being that there is no amnesty for rebels. They are to be dealt with by the ordinary law."

Possibly the sentiments here expressed may be regarded by some as savouring of unchristian-like inclemency, but let it be remembered that just at this time Moffat was visiting for the last time the survivors of another band of "rebels," who five years before had lost lands, homes, and belongings, not to speak of freedom, without so much as the vestige of a trial. Is it to be wondered at that, in the bitterness of his heart, as he looked at these poor wretches, he should cry, "Let justice be done though the heavens fall!"?

CHAPTER XXIX

VRYBURG AND NAMAQUALAND, 1902-1903

IN March 1902 Cecil Rhodes died. Looked at dispassionately, his life and methods would provide a strict moralist with opportunity enough for hostile criticism, and it is not surprising that Moffat found himself unable to join in the chorus of indiscriminating praise that was chanted round his grave.

This aloofness rose not from anything in the shape of envy or little-mindedness, but was the natural result of his deep-seated distrust of a man who, measured by certain standards, in Moffat's estimation, had been weighed and found wanting.

He writes calmly and judicially on the subject, and his reference in the same letter to the death of a much-respected resident of Cape Town shows that mere difference of opinion never blinded him to the merits of others.

March 31, 1902.

“ You will probably have cable news of Rhodes' death. There is a tremendous flood tide of adulation in the pulpit and Press. The thing is being quite overdone, and I should not wonder if it rouses a reaction in many minds, though no one would care, under the circumstances, to say anything; the old adage holds good, ‘ Nil nisi bonum.’ Many people seem to have serious doubts whether the Almighty will be able to run South Africa now that Cecil John is gone. They seem to have overlooked the fact that after all C. J. was only an instrument, and that the Creator and Ruler of the world has managed to get along somehow hitherto, and that when He discards one instrument He can lay hands on another without difficulty.

A death that comes much nearer to our circle is that of

———. He will be a great loss. Not only did he stand high professionally, but he was a man who was on the side of righteousness and his moral influence in the community was good. His attitude on the Boer question was a minor difference which we can afford to let alone.”

April 23, 1902.

“At present we are done to death with Rhodes. Now that his will has been published I suppose there will not be much more room for the subject. I freely admit the greatness of the man, but I cannot agree with the unmixed panegyric and the condonation of the evil that he has done. I cannot forget my old friend Lobengula, and the way in which he was done to death; though as a heathen he acted up to his light and never went back on any promise he made to the British Government. Happily I have no need to speak. I can but sit still and let things right themselves, as they have a way of doing in God’s world. It would do poor old Loben no good to start on a Quixotic tilt on his behalf, and I can leave both him and Rhodes in the hands of their just and merciful Maker.”

But during the latter months of the war another coming event had begun to cast its shadow over the quiet home at Mowbray, and on July 21 Emily Moffat passed to her rest, in her seventy-first year.

For some time she had been in failing health, and though up and about, had rarely gone out; there was no definite illness, only a gradual decline of cardiac power, and her mental faculties remained clear to the last, so that she was able to spend much of her time in writing to her children and large circle of friends. Fortunately within the last six months of her life everyone of her scattered flock paid her at least one visit, and several were present at the closing scene. For some weeks she had known that the end was in sight, and she had waited for it with calm faith and assurance.

On July 22 Moffat wrote to one of his sons:

“The dear mother fell asleep last night at a quarter to ten o’clock. It was literally a ‘falling asleep’—she went into a quiet sleep, and a quarter of an hour afterwards there were one or two deep breaths and she was gone.

Her last words to me alone some time before were, 'I am very weary.'

Within half an hour of the end she would not be satisfied till I went away to have my cup of cocoa. Her thoughts were always busy for others.

I need not say what the loss is to me, but I am thinking of her children. She was the common centre, widely scattered as you are. I know that her hallowed influence over your hearts will not, cannot die.

She will not return to us, but we shall go to her."

This event led to the break-up of the home at Mowbray, but fortunately, just at this juncture, opportunity for work and change of scene presented itself, for he was asked by the Congregational Church at Vryburg, in Bechwanaland, to act for a few months during the temporary absence of the regular minister. His duties among the Bechwana prisoners were just at an end, for their indentures were falling in; he therefore accepted this call gladly, and in August proceeded to Vryburg, where he remained until December.

At no time a very delectable place of residence, this little up-country village was still in the throes of a process of post-war cleaning up, and must have had but few charms, judging from Moffat's description of it:

August 26, 1902.

"This place is full of activity at present, having been a large centre for troops, but they are moving away now and they will be a good riddance. We are still plagued with no end of restrictions which have no apparent utility except to make the lives of civilians a burden to them. The station is a mile and a half from the town; I cannot say it is exactly comfortable here. It is an exceptional privilege to get a tub. So far I have not been able to get my clothes washed, and am thinking of sending them to Kimberley by rail! The tramping of thousands of men and animals has reduced the whole of the town and its environs to a condition of dust which surpasses any experience of mine even in the old camp days of Kimberley."

September 3, 1902.

"I shall be very glad to see the last of the denizens in the Concentration Camps here away, but to tell the truth



EMILY MOFFAT, 1898.

Lavender, Bromley.

it is a little difficult for them to face the prospect of being dumped down on their farms with a roofless house and nothing to commence life with. There are many true loyalists in almost as bad a case. The —s are here living on their own fat, and there cannot be much of that, but it is to be hoped that such people will get a little compensation to put them on the first rung of the ladder. But there are so many undeserving and unscrupulous people who propose to reap a harvest out of this compensation business.

A large proportion of the Boers who have been in the Concentration Camps, rebel and otherwise, have been reduced to utter destitution. We must do something for these or we shall have an appalling mass of pauperism on our hands.

Yet if we do help them in ever so small a way, there is a yell of indignation from the loyalists. I am finding a refuge in unintermitting occupation of which I have no lack. What with the unwonted strain of having to preach three times a week, and the visitation of this miscellaneous flock, and some Sechwana translation for the Government, the time seems full enough."

September 12, 1902.

"I am very sorry to hear such poor accounts of ability in high places with you. I agree with you that it is a wonder how the old British Empire manages to rumble along at all. It is just the same in South Africa. Some of the appointments in the New Colonies are those of abject donkeys, and we shall have a crop of minor troubles shortly due to the stupidity of these men. Parliamentary Government has many drawbacks, but it is better than Crown Colony Government."

October 11, 1902.

"I would like to indulge in a long visitation to my children, but I must be quite sure, if I go off on a purely pleasure trip of this kind, that I do not leave behind or pass by some obvious duty.

For instance, I am here, and though not exactly in the lap of luxury, yet with full satisfaction of mind that I have been able to make a holiday easy for a poor minister, who would have been hard set to get a substitute.

But if I am ever to come your way, I must not put it off

too long, for I am getting older and less fit to rough it with a light heart."

December 22, 1902.

"I am pulling up the tent-pegs and on the eve of a start. The people here seem to have appreciated my efforts and have shown it in a pleasing way. So far as they are concerned I have had a pleasant time, but the season has been trying even to me, and I ought to be acclimatised.

Things are slowly settling down. Naturally, with so vast an area of action and such a variety of details, there are many cases of injustice. It bears hard on people who have suffered for their loyalty to see rebels coming off better and being treated with every consideration. We must trust in the healing influence of time."

Moffat left Vryburg on December 23 for Mafeking, where one of his daughters, Mrs. Loosley, was living, and after spending three weeks with her returned to Cape Town. Hardly had he arrived there when he was asked by the Government to undertake some temporary work in Namaqualand in connection with a Bill dealing with Mission property, which was shortly to be introduced. The fact that they could regard it as possible for Moffat, in his sixty-ninth year, to face what would have been a trying experience even for a young man shows how specious had been the pretext for which he was called upon to retire on pension eight years previously. Namaqualand in its physical configuration and climate is very similar to what was formerly German South-west Africa, with which the late war has familiarised many people outside of Africa. Moffat himself thoroughly understood what a journey through such a country would entail, but being always ready to render any assistance where mission interests were at stake, he agreed to go.

The prospect in some ways rather pleased him, for he had not visited that part of the country before, and after this trip he could claim personal acquaintance with the greater part of British South Africa, with the exception of a few small districts in Kaffraria and Zululand. But it was no light undertaking for a man of his age, and that he should have been able to carry it through successfully is evidence of his pluck and hardihood.

March 9, 1903.

“ I am expecting to start as soon as I can get a coasting steamer for Namaqualand. I have been asked by the Government to go and conduct an inquiry into some troubles which have arisen on the Missionary Institutions, and to collect information with a view to legislation to improve land tenure next session. I am very glad to be asked, for they might have chosen a less sympathetic person and I may be able to do good.

The Government (Cape Colonial) seems to have got the notion that it can make use of me ; there have been times when I should like this to have occurred to the authorities, but they only seem to have woken up to it now. It seems like going back into Government service, but it is not that ; it is a passing thing, I am too old to commit myself to the worry and wear and tear of official life again ; the harness would gall too much now.”

O'OKIEP, NAMAQUALAND,

March 30, 1903.

“ Here I am in one of the queerest nooks of our continent of South Africa. I came to Port Nolloth in a little coasting steamer, and made the journey from there to here by a train ; two-foot gauge, with little carriages that would do as roomy packages for a good-sized piano. However, we did the distance, ninety-two miles, in about twelve hours, which was not bad considering that at one place the engine had to go ahead with half the train and then go back for the other half, and had to take an excursion along a branch line with some trucks while we waited for it at the junction, and that our total ascent in the whole distance was 3,000 feet. It is not a Government line, but exists for the service of the copper-mining companies. This place is the headquarters of these. This is going to be a longish job—not the actual inquiry itself, but the getting the necessary meetings arranged and covering the ground. I start next for Palla, 110 miles distant, over an almost waterless country known as Bushmanland, because I suppose it must have been about the last refuge of these unhappy beings. I think even they are gone now, or merged in the Hottentots ; though even these are themselves a minority, the very low-class Dutch farmers and the intervening mix between them and the Hottentots being the prevailing type. The

aboriginal Hottentots are few, for the white admixture has been going on for a century or more. The condition of the people, but for the drink, would be reasonably prosperous, for they earn good wages in the mines. It is to be regretted that the Company does not encourage the coming of married employees, the result being what you might expect of a lot of young workmen surrounded by a mongrel race with very low ideas of morality.

I have got to confer not only with the missionaries, but with the people. I am glad to be able to do a service, at least I hope it will be such, as the Rhenish missionaries at all events, who cover the largest amount of the ground, express great confidence at my selection for this work."

KIVREK FONTEIN,

April 11, 1903.

"I am at a farm about sixteen miles from O'okiep. The owner is to drive me to Palla ninety-odd miles on. We came here last night, but it appears we have to cross a sandy desert, and must collect all our energies and husband the strength of our animals, four horses and two mules, with a cart.

As we have to carry food for the horses and food and water for ourselves, the load is rather heavy. We leave after midday, travel right through the night, and get to water in the afternoon of the next day. We could do it in a much shorter time if the roads were hard, but it is the sand that kills the beasts. My conductor seems a good sort (English). He is farming in a very small way here. He has an iron house about the size of a Cape Town tramcar which he has divided into two rooms, but he keeps everything very nice, and even attempts a little embellishment. It must be a lonely kind of life. He has two or three servants; his nearest neighbours are eight miles away.

The 'natives,' who are scattered in the oddest way all over the country in solitary huts of the beehive type, are Hottentots or mixed. They are a poor sort as compared with our Bantu. One can hardly wonder at it in such a poverty-stricken and desolate country; average rainfall between five and ten inches.

It is difficult to see the attraction of such a life for a decent young fellow who has not sunk or compromised himself."

O'OKIEP,
May 2, 1903.

" I have just returned from Palla, where there is a Romish station.

Two nights each way had to be spent—at least such part of them as we were not on the march—on the bare veld with not even a bush to shelter behind. That we always get in Bechwanaland, and at the worst some firewood, but here you can scrape together just enough brushwood to boil the kettle with and no more. The second journey was to a German mission station in the north-west corner of the Colony, close to the Orange River on one side and the sea on another; the travelling was even worse—a wild broken country, dry and barren beyond description. As before there were no houses of call, and three nights instead of two we bivouacked under the sky. Another surprising discovery was that, in that region known as Richtersveld, three-fourths of the people do not even understand Dutch, and the whole of the proceedings had to be turned into Namaqua, or Hottentot, surely the most uncouth tongue spoken on earth. However, my roughest work is now over, and the other places are more accessible. I am not much the worse for wear, though everybody tells me that excursions of this kind are hardly the thing for a man of my years.

It almost amounts to a surprise to find out what a lonely desolate country a large part of Namaqualand still is. I had a pretty good idea of what it used to be, but supposed that it had undergone the same process of settlement as other parts of the Colony. One may travel ninety miles without seeing so much as a single house. Nothing but little mat huts at long intervals. My work is not difficult. I have a draft Bill which I have to explain to the inhabitants, and to get their views upon it and also to hear any complaints. There has been much friction between some of the people and the German missionaries, who seem to combine spiritual and secular functions, with a somewhat unsatisfactory result.

So you have got a 'brand new disease' as you call it up your way [sleeping sickness]. I never knew such a country as the African Continent for diseases of men and animals. It seems a wonder that anything is left alive. Here there is not much trouble in that way, but 'between Sun and Sand,' as Scully calls his book, there is not much room for

microbes or bacilli—I don't know which is which, or which is t'other."

PORT NOLLOTH,
May 28, 1903.

"I am sitting in the dining-room of a boarding-house waiting for the *Nautilus* to finish the work and to get up steam for Cape Town.

I have finished what I was sent to do ; it has been a rough time so far as travelling is concerned, but I have met many nice people and have been helped with real good-will. This is a queer place. The usual sea-coast line of rock and sand, the latter stretching inland a desolate waste of thirty miles. A row of houses facing the beach with a good macadamised road in front of them—a pier running out to the deeper water where the Copper Company's steamers lie a mile out and discharge their coal into lighters, receiving the half-smelted copper that they take away—a long process often retarded by bad weather. There is a magistrate, an Anglican parson, the rest mostly officials of the Company, and one or two business houses. I have travelled about seven hundred miles by cart drawn by horses or oxen, and have visited all the missionary stations—Romish, German (Rhenish), and Methodists—and could draw some interesting comparisons, but I must not misuse my advantages as a guest very kindly received everywhere."

S.S. "NAUTILUS," OFF SALDANHA BAY,
June 4, 1903.

"I have at last got away from Namaqualand. I lost nearly a week at Port Nolloth, for, owing to a south-west swell and the surf on the bar, nothing could be done and the steamer was weather-bound.

She has next to nothing on board and is only 300 tons, so dances about on the top of the waves like a cork.

I have taken two full months over this job. I don't know whether I have done any good, but I have done my best anyhow."

CHAPTER XXX

TRAVELS, 1903-1904

ON June 5 Moffat reached Cape Town none the worse for his rough experiences in Namaqualand, but as so often happens, the change from the free, out-of-doors life to civilised surroundings was immediately followed by a severe cold. He was now planning what had been in his mind for some time, a pilgrimage, for so he called it, round to the homes of his different children. Two of these at that time were living in Cape Town; the remainder were scattered at varying distances between that latitude and the equator. He had intended to start off at once, but as usual, directly he arrived in Cape Town, importunate brother-ministers descended upon him in quest of his services, and it was not till July 2 that he managed to get away. The delay, however, altered his plans, for instead of beginning his round with his eldest son, as would have been natural, he had to proceed at once to Bulawayo in order to be present at the marriage of his fourth son, Howard U. Moffat. This was his first visit to what had now become Rhodesia, and it must indeed have seemed strange to find himself on the site of Lobengula's kraal after a six days' journey from Cape Town.

To his Son in Uganda

BULAWAYO,
July 9, 1903.

“Here I am—thirteen hundred miles nearer to you in geographical distance, though practically no nearer than before. It seems like a dream that this day week I was still in Cape Town with a day to spare, and I spent one day in Mafeking with Mary Meta [his eldest daughter, Mrs. J. S. Loosley].

My cough is almost gone and the air is like champagne.

Bulawayo is, of course, a wonderful sight to see for a man who eleven years ago lived here in a tent and wagon. People expect me to go into raptures, but I cannot help thinking of Lobengula.

The phrase 'noble savage' is often misused, but it was true of him. He was a gentleman in his way, and was foully sinned against by Jameson and his gang. Bulawayo is spread over a vast expanse of ground, and there are quite large patches of the forest primeval through which one drives from one house to another in the suburbs. The town is laid out on too huge and ambitious a scale. I cannot imagine what absurd ideas must have possessed its founders.

I do not think the place is destined to a great future. It is not the centre of the gold district, nor is it the seat of the Government, which is Salisbury. It has nothing but its salubrity to boast of. It is 1,361 miles to Cape Town, whereas Salisbury is only about 300 to Beira."

July 17, 1903.

"I am going to have my first ride in a motor—fancy coming to Bulawayo for that!—to-morrow, when I am to go to the 'World's View,' where Rhodes' grave is."

LIVINGSTONE VICTORIA FALLS,
July 26, 1903.

"I left Bulawayo on Monday by rail, coming 160 miles that day and landing at the railhead at 11 p.m. in total darkness, in the middle of a chaos of forest, railway earthworks, sleepers, rails, and crowds of native labourers with their long rows of fires. We got packed into the coach, four passengers, with no end of luggage and six huge mail-bags just anyhow, and left at 1 a.m. From that time till Friday night when we arrived here it was one confused welter of day and night—struggling along through endless woods, stopping for meals, getting snatches of sleep as the overloaded coach crawled along drawn by eight oxen, tremendous belts of sand alternating with a broken country and a road strewn with boulders. My companions were most kind and considerate, but it was a rough experience even for a man fairly accustomed to knocking about.

The distance was only 109 miles, but the travelling is so heavy. On Friday we drew near the Falls—we had been hearing the distant roar all day, for we were going so slowly. About four o'clock we began to see the white column of mist, and in a short time we were on the south end of the Falls. I will not attempt anything so trivial as a verbal description. It was all and more than all I expected to see. We reached the ferry five miles higher up, and crossed at eleven in black darkness and found ourselves in this place, a little township¹ mostly consisting of round huts, but very jolly and comfortable. We are being well entertained. Yesterday we were taken to the north end of the Falls and spent the day there. I have seen enough, but nothing would satisfy me better than to have a month of it.

I have a quiet day to myself here. The other visitors have gone for a second outing, but I prefer to be still and think of yesterday, and it would have jarred with my Sabbath peace. I leave early to-morrow for Bulawayo."

BULAWAYO,
August 22, 1903.

"I am staying here to take the work at the Presbyterian church for the first Sunday in September. I spent four days of this week in the country visiting some of the 'old hands.' I also went to Rhodes' farm, where there is an enormous dam. It cost £50,000, and I question if the farm will pay interest on expenditure; but it is a good experimental affair as a model to the settlers in this country, to be followed at a respectful and practical distance."

SALISBURY,
September 11, 1903.

"Here I am a step further on my pilgrimage [at the home of his second daughter, Mrs. C. H. Tredgold].

The place to my mind is preferable to Bulawayo, and has the makings of a beautiful town. Upon the whole the climate is more agreeable, ten degrees average more rain, and there are fewer thorns and briars and more agricultural land."

¹ The township of Livingstone was afterwards removed to a healthier site a few miles away from the river's banks.—AUTHOR.

October 5, 1903.

“I am making a move next week—I should have done so before but for the fact that I let myself into an engagement to take the services at Gwelo on the 18th.”

Towards the end of October Moffat returned to the Colony and proceeded to Quagga's Kirk, the farm of his eldest son, Livingstone Moffat, situated in the Winterberg Mountains of the Eastern Province. Here he had the added pleasure of meeting his sister, Miss J. Moffat, who had come from England on a visit to South Africa, and they spent some happy weeks together among the ideal surroundings of an up-to-date South African farm, whose name, it may be mentioned, is reminiscent of the days when its vales resounded with the scudding hoofs of countless quaggas, those gentle beasts which possibly might have been turned to some useful purpose had not the ruthlessness of man numbered them among the extinct animals of earlier ages. On leaving there he and his sister passed down the Bavians River valley, and visited old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Pringle, at whose farm, Lyndoch, his son had not only served his apprenticeship, but had finished up by marrying one of the daughters of the house.

Going on from there they reached Cape Town in time for Christmas.

On January 27, 1904, Moffat left Cape Town for Mombasa, his next objective being Uganda, where his third son held an appointment in the Colonial Medical Service. This and his subsequent trip to Nyassaland introduced him to an entirely new current of thought and experience, and so striking was the contrast that he might have imagined himself transported to another continent. Not only were his eyes now to become accustomed to the landscape of the equatorial belt, but in the coast towns of Zanzibar and Mombasa he for the first time came across that strange medley of peoples whose habits, manners, and customs are so saturated with the flavour of the unchanging East. As he travelled inland, it is true, the condition of the natives, the teeming herds of game, and the general primitiveness of all he saw must have taken him back to the days of his youth and early manhood in South Africa, and it might have seemed to him that the clock had been put back, and that, like Rip



Mattys, New Bond Street, London.

MISS JANE GARDINER MOFFAT.

Born 1840.

Van Winkle, he had stepped back into the surroundings of an earlier day. But East Africa is a land whose initial stage of exploration and settlement has been strangely short, for hardly had it emerged from its original obscurity when a railway crawled across its solitary places and primeval jungle, like an outstretched tentacle of civilisation, bringing with it, no doubt, many blessings, yet not a little hideousness. The transition had been so abrupt that the new and the old still lay side by side—primitive man and twentieth-century progress. To one like Moffat, who had watched the same process spread over a lifetime in South Africa, this extraordinary development seemed almost uncanny, emphasising as it did the headlong march of modern civilisation. He had known the time when this tract of country had been marked on the maps by blank spaces, and when the existence of the great inland sea of the Victoria Lake had been unsuspected; yet now he found himself travelling towards its shores in a comfortable railway carriage.

It chanced that he crossed the lake in the s.s. *Sir William Mackinnon*, the first steamer launched upon the waters of the Victoria, the story of whose building is in itself an epic. She had not the refinements of the railway liners, but her genial Irish skipper, the late Captain Hutchinson, R.N.R., treated the old man right royally, making him as comfortable as the restricted accommodation would permit, and brought him safely to Entebbe, the port and Government headquarters in Uganda. At this time the epidemic of sleeping sickness was at its height and lay like a paralysing blight upon this goodly, though at its best none too healthy, land. Moffat spent several weeks with his son and daughter-in-law, and though much interested in all he saw, the social atmosphere offered few attractions for a man of his age and habits. No doubt it must have appeared to him a trifle careless and frivolous, with its suggestion of the "let us eat, drink, and be merry" mood, which life in the tropics seems to engender. The following extract is from a letter to his sister, while at Entebbe:

March 18, 1904.

"The voyage across the lake was quite a picnic, in a little steamer of 100 tons. There are two quite large

boats of 600 tons each, but they did not suit our time. However, we were comfortable enough. They took their time; the distance across the north end of the lake is 175 miles, but we only travelled by day and anchored at islands both nights. We were quite out of sight of the mainland for long distances, but there were always islands about—as beautiful as fairyland. Everything looks so green and English in the distance, but of course close at hand the palms and bananas disillusionise you. Yet there is a dark shadow over it—mosquitoes (and fever) by night, tsetse fly (and sleeping sickness) by day. Otherwise the climate is delightful. I am wearing just the same clothes I left Cape Town in. I do not care much for the style of life. It is too Indian, and I sometimes would like to kick the servants to Jerusalem, when they come messing about, as if I could not even dress myself without their assistance! I went on Sunday to the native service here—of course I did not understand a word, but I wanted to see and also to show my sympathy. The congregation all sit on the floor, except one or two, who I suppose are head men, or swells of a sort. The men are all in the long white nightshirts in vogue here; the women in their bark cloth. The singing was poor, no melody, but I must see the headquarters station before I form an opinion, as this, I suppose, would be called an out-station and is a comparatively new departure.”

Perhaps what interested Moffat most was his visit to Namirembe, the Church Missionary Society's station at the capital. He spent a Sunday there, and the Cathedral with its two thousand worshippers filled him with amazement and delight—for he had followed the history of missionary enterprise in Uganda from its very beginning, and the names of its heroic founders and the story of their early struggles were familiar to him.

On his return journey across the lake he visited Jinja, where the Nile, bursting forth a full-grown river at the Murchison Falls, begins its long course to the Mediterranean. Remembering as he did what a fascination the quest of this mysterious river's source had had for Livingstone, this sight gave him exquisite pleasure, mingled with humble gratitude that he should have been permitted to gaze upon that which had been denied to the great explorer.

After spending a few days at Nairobi, he went on to Mombasa and took steamer for Chinde, the port of call for Nyassaland, where he wished to visit his missionary son, the Rev. Malcolm Moffat, a member of the Free Church Presbyterian Missionary Society at Livingstonia.

His journey up the Zambezi and Shire Rivers stirred his emotions more deeply even than that to Uganda. He was following here the footsteps of Livingstone, the perusal of whose books had made him familiar with names and places along the whole route, and the spirit of his great kinsman must have seemed to accompany him at every turn. Fortunately also, while going up the Zambezi he was able to land at one, to him sacred, spot to see the grave of his sister Mary Livingstone, who lies "at Shupanga brae." After looking at her last resting-place and remembering that other tomb in the grey abbey overseas, he might well, as he journeyed from one flourishing mission station to another, comfort himself with the reflection that in these he was looking upon whitening fields of harvest sprung from seed first sown by David and Mary Livingstone.

The following extracts from his letters give a glimpse of his experiences during this time :

MOZAMBIQUE,
May 7, 1904.

"We were timed for Chinde to-day, but are behind time. We have had a dawdling voyage. I am the only English-speaking passenger in the saloon, so I have not been in danger of indulging in too much vain conversation. This desultory idleness is all very well for a time, but I shall have had enough of it when I get back to South Africa."

BLANTYRE,
May 23, 1904.

"I am thus far, but the journey is taking a long time, for the links do not fit well. I cannot get away till next week. We left Chinde on the 10th. Our little steamer was really a flat-bottomed barge with two tiers of cabins below and saloon above; stern wheels. We carried no cargo, but had a barge fastened on each side. I was told that the whole thing only drew nineteen inches, this on account of the sand-banks and shallows, upon which we spent a good deal of our time, for the water is low and navigation difficult. It must need quite an education for

a man to be able to work these vessels up and down such rivers as the Zambezi and Shire !

The barges carried about forty tons of cargo. It is a clumsy affair, and needs a lot of management to work up against stream, which is fairly strong, and there is little steering control. We stopped for an hour at Shupanga, and I visited the grave and house. The 'white fathers' (Catholics) have now a large establishment there and keep the grave in very fair order.

In due time we reached Chiromo, at the junction of the Ruo and Shire Rivers. There we transferred to a smaller steamer and got up to Katunga. From that point there is a good, well-made road to Blantyre with bullock wagons and carts plying on it, but the passengers were provided with 'machilas' (glorified hammocks). I cannot say that I am charmed with this mode of conveyance, and would much rather have walked ; but the bearers go faster, keeping up a kind of trot, two sets of men changing about. We rose three thousand feet between Katunga and Blantyre, twenty-eight miles, so there is a considerable change in temperature. We had to have a fire last night. The missionary apparatus here is fairly complete, and they seem to have an efficient staff—minister, doctor, schoolmaster, lady teachers and nurses."

BLANTYRE,

June 8, 1904.

" I little expected to be here at this date. My departure had been arranged, my luggage had gone on, and I was to start next morning when I was quite suddenly knocked over, and had to submit to the fact that the fever had got me in its grip. It was a week ago yesterday, and it is only to-day that I am comparatively free to walk about out of doors. So now I must wait in patience for the next steamer. How I managed to get it I do not know, for I was most careful and never slept without a mosquito curtain ¹ till I arrived here, where they are not used at this time of the year.

This has been a keen disappointment, but I am sure there has been good at the back of it. I could not have fallen

¹ Those who are unaccustomed to nets often forget that it is not enough to have one. It must be properly tucked in, and the unwary occupant of the bed may very easily, when getting into it, allow himself to be accompanied by a few wily mosquitoes.—AUTHOR.

ill in a better place, and I have had most careful and effective nursing in the missionary hospital.

Most effective and thorough work has been done here. Curiously enough, it is the civil population who are largely and strongly in sympathy with the natives. It is the Government with which there is friction.

This institution where I am staying is the headquarters of the Church of Scotland Missions in Central Africa. The staff numbers fifteen—six men, six unmarried women, and three wives. Everyone has his or her prescribed line of duty, and the whole thing works like a clock under the firm and unquestioned authority of Dr. Hetherwicke, the principal. So the highest efficiency is secured and an avoidance of squabbles. A Committee is all very well as a consultative body, but not to administer; that needs a head. Consequently the rate of progress is most satisfactory.”

LIVINGSTONIA,
July 7, 1904.

“At last I have reached my destination nearly two months from Chinde. It is a comfort to be amongst my own people again. Malcolm met me at Blantyre and we had a fairly good time. We took the route through Zomba, the administrative headquarters. I had a couple of days with the Commissioner and his lady; they gave us a most kindly and home-like reception. The voyage over the lake [Nyassa] was interesting in its contrasts with the previous one on the Victoria Nyanza. Nyassa is comparatively destitute of islands. It is very deep—I think they have gone eight hundred fathoms—and it looks as blue as the deep sea. Their crack boat, the *Queen Victoria*, is only eighty tons, and must have a lively time when a stiff breeze is blowing. We had ‘sea-horses,’ but were going before them, so did not feel it. The part of the coast as we neared Florence Bay is grand: a huge mountain range running down steep to the water’s edge, with here and there a little bay with its white sand beach. We had an uproarious reception here, and were carried up the mountain-side 2,400 feet in two hours in ‘machilas’ by eager relays always ready to take up the running. Malcolm must be exceedingly popular, for in my case the enthusiasm was vicarious. The cottage overlooks the lake—it is very plain but homely.

I have not yet been round the lands, which are very extensive, but I have visited most of the workshops and the staff. The industrial work is very far on, and some things are quite up-to-date. It is marvellous what they make the natives do here. It seemed so strange to land at Kota-Kota, to go up to the telegraph office (the Trans-continental line) and hand in a message to a native in the ordinary dress of the country. There was no one else there; he and his wife were old pupils at Livingstonia.

This country is capable of a good deal, but lacks the railway facilities of East Africa. The mission institute here is a large concern, and its aims and ambitions are still larger. I think there are fifteen Europeans on the staff. The population (native) is increasing very rapidly now that there is no longer the drain of the slave trade. ”

BLANTYRE,

October 26, 1904.

“ I am just crawling out of another attack of fever. I kept splendidly well at Livingstonia, which is fairly healthy. In an evil hour I was persuaded to call and spend a week at a place called Bandawe on the way down, and was kept rather close with services and meetings. The end of it was that I collapsed badly, and had to be carried on board the steamer. The two days on the lake revived me a good deal, and I was able to tackle the land journey, but arrived here in a very shaky condition. I managed to worry through my share of the work I had undertaken to do at the Missionary Conference here, and then I went down again. However, I am on the mend, but have a lot of painful rheumatism about me. It wears off during the day, but effectually spoils my rest at night. The Conference is over and I have nothing to do but recruit. In embarking at Bandawe the boat with luggage got swamped, and I have suffered much loss. Most of my photographs have been much damaged and a good many quite destroyed.”

SALISBURY,

November 30, 1904.

“ I have been going through a deplorable time. The fever at Blantyre developed into all sorts of troublesome things—first rheumatism, then inflammation in the eyes



J. B. MOFFAT.
M. M. LOOSLEY.

LIVINGSTONE MOFFAT,
J. S. MOFFAT.

H. A. MOFFAT.
E. R. TREGOLD.

and mouth so that for a fortnight I could neither read nor write, and was only able to take spoon meat and to drink through an invalid cup. For three weeks I may safely say I had only one decent night's rest. I managed to worry through, however, and arrived here on the 21st. I do not know how I should have got on but for a Mr. MacGregor, one of the Livingstonia staff, who was going home on furlough. He put himself at my service day and night. We parted at Beira, and I had the thirty-six hours' railway journey alone. Happily I had no one in the compartment with me, and could grunt and growl without disturbing anyone else, and right glad I was to arrive here and feel at home with my own people. Under the medical care of Dr. Appleyard I am progressing favourably, and hope to move on to Cape Town next week."

Mrs. Tredgold, his daughter, was horrified at her father's condition on his arrival at Salisbury, and was surprised that he had survived the journey from Beira, but under her careful ministrations he soon picked up and made a really wonderful recovery; curiously enough, he never had any further definite return of the malaria, which as a rule is not so easily shaken off. When his age and all the circumstances of the case are taken into consideration, one is forced to the conclusion that he was one of those men who take a lot of killing. After a fortnight's rest and treatment at Salisbury he moved on to Cape Town, which he reached before Christmas, after an absence of nearly eleven months.

His illness was an unfortunate ending to a most enjoyable and interesting trip, but no permanent ill-effects followed, and he was wont to say that the game had been worth the candle; and to the end there remained to him nothing but pleasant memories, not only of strange scenes and tropic landscapes, but of what to him was a far grander, inspiring sight—the spread of the kingdom of peace and righteousness in a land where, only a few years before, cruelty, heathenism, and, worst of all, that abomination of desolation, slavery, had reigned supreme.

CHAPTER XXXI

LAST YEARS OF ACTIVE SERVICE, 1905-1915

HAVING concluded his pilgrimage, it seemed to Moffat that nothing now remained but to chant his *Nunc dimittis*, for he had seen of the travail of his soul and had been satisfied. This was no recent mood induced by physical weakness. Quite early in the course of his travels, long before fever had brought him low, he had written concerning his future plans, "It seems to me that there is but little for me to do now but to go back to Cape Town, and to sit down quietly to await the sunset."

But in thinking thus he was too hurriedly anticipating, for the sun still shone high above the western horizon and some hours of strenuous labour yet lay before him.

Being fully persuaded, however, that his days of wandering and active work were over, he settled down in the home of his youngest son, Dr. H. A. Moffat, and endeavoured to accustom himself to the, to him, dreary prospect of idleness and repose. But within a few weeks he was able to report himself "nearly as strong as a year ago," and very soon his restless energy drove him into some preaching and missionary deputation work in Cape Town and its vicinity.

Little by little he dropped into old habits, and we next find him complaining that his life, "though not idle, is desultory," and with increasing strength the desire for regular occupation grew greater. Of opportunity there was no lack; his chief difficulty consisted in deciding where duty called most clearly. At such times his attitude always had in it something suggestive of fatalism, at least so it appeared to the onlooker, though he himself would vehemently repudiate such an interpretation of his conduct, as is illustrated by the following extract from a letter. A correspondent, who had about this time also reached a

parting of the ways, had quoted to him an old Arab proverb : " Thy lot in life is seeking after thee, therefore be thou at rest from seeking after it," and, in doing so, had maintained that the sentiment expressed was a useful staff on which to pause and lean when branching paths confront the perplexed traveller on life's journey.

In reply to this Moffat wrote :

" It is well that you are content with the old Arab philosophy ; I fancy the Anglo-Saxon would be all the better for a little infusion of it in his restless nature. It is really not fatalism, as you call it, but the best kind of faith, if one will but admit the existence of a beneficent and overruling Will outside our own."

Acting on this assumption, he himself waited for the course of events to show the Divine guidance.

For several years he had had a strong wish to settle at Kimberley, where thousands of Bechwana were now working, for he felt that his knowledge of their language would here be turned to good account. Moreover, these wanderers were as sheep without a shepherd over whom his heart yearned. Several considerations made him hesitate. To begin with, he now rather feared to undertake responsibilities that might at his age prove too heavy ; also there was the financial question, not to speak of the fact that in attempting to establish an independent mission in Kimberley he might, as he put it, find himself " treading on other people's toes." Before he had come to any decision in the matter he received a call from the Congregational Church in Vryburg where he had ministered in 1902. Its pulpit was now vacant, and the congregation asked Moffat to fill the gap while they were searching for a permanent minister. Thus in May 1905 he settled down once more as *locum tenens* in the little village of Vryburg.

The time stipulated for was three months, but this gradually extended itself to six, and then after a brief interval to eighteen.

On September 4 Moffat wrote :

" In the middle of next month I have to go to Uitenhage to attend the meetings of the Congregational Union, and then on to Cape Town, leaving the people here at leisure to

consider whether they will give me another call for twelve months. They have already done so, but I put them off in order that I might see whether I was still fairly fit in October. If I am, I shall then be open to a call. Possibly they may have changed their minds by that time. I see a few storm-clouds on the horizon. Some of the people, I think, are finding me a bit hard and puritanical, and may like to try a more liberal-minded man. I must confess the laxity of ideas as to religious discipline is somewhat startling. I do not believe in church profession as an elegant compromise with the devil, so as to keep in with him and the other side too; and that is what it amounts to in the lives of a good many people. We shall see. Many of the people are exceedingly kind and appreciative, but if there should be an adverse minority I shall certainly not be slow to move off, and let them find a man of easier notions. They are none too scarce."

In due course the second call came, and Moffat returned to Vryburg in November on the understanding that he would remain, if necessary, another twelve months.

VRYBURG,
December 1, 1905.

"I am back here, and am now regularly installed in the humdrum of this little place. It is a woebegone village in the dry wastes of Bechwanaland, not an ideal place, being little more than a barren sand-heap, except for the tiny plots where, by dint of irrigation, people manage to raise some fruit and flowers. But that does not concern me particularly if there is work for me to do, and apparently there is.

It has been a happy time here, and I hope will be to the end; the close and constant work has been a pleasant change, and I am warranted in hoping that I have done good to the people and especially to the children. It is quite pleasant to get the smiling salutations of the latter as I meet them in the street. They seem to look upon me as their friend, and a large part of the morning congregation consists of children and young people.

But I have to grapple with the selfish spirit of mere commercialism which is predominant. It blinds our 'superior' race to its obligations to the inferior with which

we are surrounded, and with which our destiny as a people is bound up for good or for evil.”

In May Moffat received the news of the death of his old friend Mr. George Unwin, his wife's cousin, and head of the well-known firm of printers.

To Mr. Edward Unwin senior

VRYPBURG,
May 10, 1906.

“I have just seen in the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* the cable which tells us that your brother George is at rest. The event brings me very near to the side of the grave. George was just a month older than I, and our friendship goes back very far. The first time I remember seeing him was when the printing works were, I think, in Bucklersbury. It was about the 8th of August 1852. I remember, because I was leaving London the next day for Bedford. I had called by invitation on your father, and he introduced me to George, who was, I think, standing at a case of type with a composing stick in his hand. It was thus I came afterwards into touch with your cousin Emily, the crowning blessing of my life for which I can never thank God enough.

Everything is very quiet with me here. I should like to see a little more life in the church, but the wind bloweth where it listeth. The spiritual vitality in South Africa has been sensibly lowered by the events of the last few years. I fear that Congregationalism is on the ebb, and that we shall wake up to find ourselves left. The odd thing about it is that the native and coloured Churches are in a more healthy condition than the European. They are agitated by Ethiopianism, but that is better than being dead and alive.

In July I have to attend a Mission Conference in Johannesburg, and am to read a paper on ‘The Native Labour and Servant Question.’ Rather a warm arena for such a subject!”

As time passed Moffat began to find that the charge of a church for so long a period was taxing his strength too heavily, and he urged the congregation to fresh efforts in the matter of searching for a permanent minister. Fortunately they were at length successful, and he was able to

leave Vryburg in October. He and his congregation parted from each other with mutual regret, and he subsequently paid them more than one friendly visit, when he always received a warm welcome.

From Vryburg he proceeded to Graham's Town to attend the Congregational Union's meetings, and from there had intended going on direct to Cape Town, but he wrote next from Kimberley :

October 28, 1906.

“ Back here ! I came to meet Mr. Searle ; our business is a native church dispute. It is caused by Ethiopianism, a curious thing which had its origin in the United States, and, having got over here, is having some vogue. In itself it is not much, but it is the symptom of a disease which is deep-rooted. We, by which I mean the Churches and Societies, are in some measure to blame. We might have adopted a bolder course in the past and have given the natives their heads more, and have thrown upon them their own responsibilities. We have kept them too much in tutelage, and they have chafed not altogether unreasonably under the restraint.

But the political element has come in, and this is the most unpleasant feature of the case. Nevertheless it would seem as if the hearts of the majority of the native Churches are sound.

I go from here to the Cape, and hope to have a little quiet change and rest.”

Moffat got back to Cape Town manifestly rather jaded and in need of rest. His experience at Vryburg had taught him one painful though salutary lesson, for it had made him realise that, however willing the spirit might be, the flesh was weak. Moreover, his deafness had increased, and he saw plainly that he must give up all thoughts of inaugurating any fresh missionary enterprise. He decided, therefore, that, in default of any clear indication, he would devote himself to writing or such duties as did not draw attention to his infirmity.

“ I have begun,” he writes at this period, “ to dread the prospect of meeting a multitude of new people of slight acquaintance who, moreover, have to get accustomed to

my partial deafness. I long for quiet. I have often said I should like to apply for the post of lighthouse-keeper at Cape Point, which is thirty miles from anywhere, and have never felt more like it than now."

But this was only a passing mood. For him "to make a pause," "to rest unburnished," was impossible. It had now become a habit with him, which he maintained up to the end of his life, to prepare at least one sermon every week. It not only kept him in practice, so to speak, and give him occupation, but it enabled him at any time to preach at short notice, and his services as a stop-gap were in constant requisition.

Many a tired minister wanting a few days' holiday was in this way able to procure a substitute to act for him during his absence.

When not preaching himself, Moffat from this time onward worshipped at Union Congregational Church, Kloof Street, of which he was elected an honorary elder. The old historic church in Caledon Square had shortly before, to his great sorrow, been closed down.

The minister at Kloof Street, the Rev. Mr. Pitt, was a man for whom Moffat had great respect, though he did not entirely admire his style of preaching. He had, however, one great recommendation, a good and clear delivery, so that Moffat was able, by sitting near the pulpit, to hear his sermons long after services led by other men had for him degenerated into a mere dumb show performance.

"Mr. Pitt," he once wrote, "is nothing if not breezy and unconventional, and he tries the nerves of the sort of people who believe in gowns and starch as the ramparts of the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet he is a man who calls a spade a spade, and he is the one Congregational minister in the Cape Peninsula who speaks up on the native question."

But it was not only as a preacher that Moffat took his share in furthering the work of God throughout the Colony. No religious meetings or conferences of a non-Anglican variety appeared to be complete without him, though his deafness interfered greatly with his capacity for usefulness. His presence nevertheless was always

appreciated, and in 1905 he had been elected an honorary Life President of the Congregational Union of South Africa.

He also held office as President of the Triennial Missionary Conference. In one capacity or another he constantly journeyed hither and thither, and even when paying private visits he was constantly impressed into service.

Though for two years he undertook no definite charge, he preached in many a town and village throughout the length and breadth of the country, like an itinerant apostle of old.

In the early part of 1908 he in this way paid a visit to the comparatively little-known districts of Oudtshoorn and George, which lie behind the coast-line between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. Here he was treading on what, from a missionary point of view, is historic ground, a fact that added greatly to the interest of his experiences, of which the following letters tell.

To his Sister, Miss Moffat

DYSELSDORP, NEAR OUDTSHOORN,
April 21, 1908.

“ I certainly never expected to find my way to this part of the country, but some time ago Mr. Plazey, the pastor, asked me to preach the ‘ Annual Sermon, ’ so we have been at it hammer and tongs since last Sunday. It has been a somewhat trying occasion for me, for everything was in Dutch, and the amount of preaching and speeci-
fying was endless and to me the flow of verbosity was mostly dumb show. Of course I came on the understanding that I could do nothing in Dutch, and that all I had to say must be translated from the English. That seemed to satisfy them, and I trust my visit may have had some good effect, if only in heartening up the pastor and his wife ; they have a good deal to try their faith. The Ethiopians are here with all their disturbing influences, and there are elements of unrest at work.

The coloured people do not appreciate education as the Bantu do, and there is not a class of educated men among them to lead them in the right way.

I came round by sea, landing at Mossel Bay, and then by cart here. I could have done the journey by rail, but you know my love for the briny.

I do not care much for this knocking about now, but it

is a compensation not only to see new country, which is pretty and interesting, but to get an insight into the life of these coloured churches. They were all once stations of the London Missionary Society. Here we are in the old mission house, quite primitive. I am sitting on the verandah, and across the valley is the Zwarteberg range, snow-capped just now. It is cold, beautifully clear, and fine.

Mr. Sam Elliott was missionary here for a short time. He died here of diphtheria, and I believe his two children."

To the Same

PACALTSDORP, NEAR GEORGE,
May 1, 1908.

"You may have heard the name of this place probably, but little more. It must be, next to Bethelsdorp, about the oldest of the L.M.S. stations within the Colony. It was founded in 1814 by the man whose name it bears, at the instance of John Campbell. He was followed by old Anderson, formerly of Griquatown. I have just come from looking at the graves of these almost forgotten pioneers. Our father visited Mr. A. at this place in the course of that famous ride from Algoa Bay to Cape Town on horseback with the manuscript of Luke in his pocket.¹

The minister, Mr. Anderson, no relation of those others, is away, but I am being entertained by his wife and family. The services begin to-night and go through till Sunday. It is a nice place, and reminds me, with a difference, of Kuruman—beautiful trees and well-kept gardens. There seems to be a more undisturbed atmosphere here—no trouble with Ethiopianism.

The churches are no longer supported by the London Missionary Society, and the congregations are scarcely ripe for independency. Mr. Anderson is a Scotchman, and has things well in hand, both temporal and spiritual. It is very nice to see his sons taking part in the day schools."

After two years of unattached service Moffat agreed to take temporary charge of the Congregational Church at

¹ In search of a printer; there being no facilities at Algoa Bay, he rode to Cape Town, where, with the assistance of another missionary, he printed the Gospel himself at the Government Press.—AUTHOR.

Zeerust, in the Transvaal, in order to release the minister for a six months' holiday, and he entered upon his duties there on December 31, 1908.

In returning thither he was back on his old tracks of years gone by. Time had thinned the ranks of those whom he had known and he missed many old faces, but there were still some who had participated with him in the stirring events of 1881. He was welcomed by all, whites and blacks, as an old friend, and the associations that clung round the place, and the memories of his missionary days that they conjured up, all helped to make him feel at home. To the end of his life he looked back with unalloyed pleasure to these few months at Zeerust, and it is pleasant to note that his feelings towards the members of his congregation appear to have been reciprocated.

To his Sister, Miss Moffat

ZEERUST,
January 16, 1909.

"Here I am at Zeerust. I reached this on Old Year's Day and am quartered in the manse. There are some nice people in the congregation, and some of the young people have grown up, I am glad to say, with a decidedly religious strain. Some of the elders are gone to their rest, and the young folk of 1881 are now middle-aged, but I am getting quite at home with them. When I arrived the whole place was burnt up with drought and seemed quite unlike the Zeerust of old, but since then good rains have set in. I have, of course, come into touch with the Bechwana. They soon found me out, and I have promised to give them a weekly service in the location. It is quite sad to hear the long list of our old Kuruman people who have gone to their rest. Many of them, you will remember, had emigrated here—their names are familiar to you."

To the Same

April 8, 1909.

"We are having a wonderful season and the country is looking simply beautiful—it always is rather pretty, but especially now. You will hardly remember our coming here with our mother in 1846 to visit the Livingstones. There were no farms here then. I was at the native location yesterday conducting a funeral. It makes my heart

ache to see some of the old people. You remember, when I left the Society in 1879, I had an idea of borrowing some money and starting on a farm in this district to do mission-work on my own account. I believe I should have got a large number of our people around me. However, God knew best. You enclose the cutting about Lieutenant Graetz. Well! When you hear a grunt you know there is a pig about. I get so inured to remarks of that kind about missions and missionary converts that it makes little or no impression upon me now; I am hardened.

After all, it is not the best kind of people who make these kinds of remark. Lieutenant Graetz omits to mention the fact that he was stranded for about a month near Serenje, and nearly ate Malcolm and Marie (missionaries!) out of house and home.¹”

ZEERUST,
February 19, 1909.

“I hope I shall be able to pull through the six months here. I am feeling a bit older than I did, but I only hope I may be able to keep things up to the normal level till Mr. Medhurst returns. The people are not a bad sort, but many take their religion as they take their bridge and tennis, when they have nothing more pressing to do. Religion ought to be a ruling passion. This sort of thing kills a man, at least it does me, to spend one's life pouring water on a duck's back or into a sieve—I would much rather work among natives, for they either give you the cold shoulder or take things in earnest.

We have had one of the heaviest rainfalls for a very long time. The local wits say that I am ‘the rain-maker,’ the tradition being that the last similar rainfall was when I was here in 1881, but I remember a similar year in 1891 at Bulawayo.”

May 19, 1909.

“My time here is running to its close. As to my work—well, I have done my best, and I hope I have been a help to some. One cannot do all that one would as a mere

¹ Lieutenant Graetz was the German officer who, in 1909, unsuccessfully attempted to drive a motor from Dar-es-salaam across the African Continent to German South-west Africa. It would appear, from Moffat's reference, that this person delivered himself in a caustic vein on the subject of missions.

stop-gap, and the young energetic pastor with his popular wife will be welcome back."

Moffat left Zeerust on June 28, and after visiting Bloemfontein to attend a missionary conference he proceeded to Cape Town, from whence he wrote :

July 18, 1909.

"I had an exceedingly touching send-off from Zeerust. Though the train left at seven a.m., and a very sharp cold morning, the best part of the congregation came to the station to say a last good-bye. A more warm-hearted, affectionate lot of folk I have never had to do with."

During the first half of 1910 Moffat acted for some months as pastor of the Congregational Church in Claremont, a suburb of Cape Town, as usual with the object of helping the regular minister to a holiday.

Having finished this duty, he left in August for Natal, where he had agreed to fill a vacancy for one session at Mpolweni, a missionary training institution.

To his Sister, Miss Moffat

MPOLWENI,

September 10, 1910.

"The voyage round from the Cape was cold and damp. I have been troubled with rheumatism and have felt a bit depressed, what with tackling the kind of work, new to me, and adapting myself to the ways of strangers, for they are all that. However, each day seems to bring a little improvement, though I thought at first that I had undertaken a little too much, but I have got a little more into the swing of the thing now. I have thirteen hours a week class-work, and of course there is the necessary preparation. For one of my classes I can use English, but for the other I require a Zulu interpreter. This is a 'Union College' of the American Zulu Mission and the United Free Church of Scotland. The two societies unite to train their theological students; it is a new departure, and still in the transition stage."

November 15, 1910.

"The session ends on the 26th of this month, so my next should be from Cape Town. It was suggested that I should put in another term, but I am quite clear about the line of duty in this case. I have been much handi-

capped by my deafness and by the necessity for interpretation, and have felt the work drag a good deal the last two or three weeks. It is the sort of work I ought to have been doing for the last thirty-five years. What a lot might have been accomplished by now! It is just what I was commencing at Kuruman when I settled down there with you and the old folks. Well! God knows best."

When he left Mpolweni his students showed their appreciation of his services in a very pleasing way, by presenting him with an address and a collection of Zulu curiosities. The whole thing was done without any help or even suggestion from the Europeans, and it is not unreasonable to hope that the spirit of the old veteran may be carried on into the next generation through the medium of these young men who had the privilege for a few months of sitting at his feet.

Except for two months spent at Uitenhage in 1911, Moffat undertook no further pastoral work for the next four years, though he continued as before to do temporary duty for a Sunday or two at a time whenever required. In October 1912 he had an attack of pneumonia, always a serious disease among the aged, but he weathered it successfully, though for a short while it curbed his energies. There is no doubt, also, that the heart weakness which began to trouble him in 1918 was caused, or at any rate aggravated, by this illness. During his convalescence his medical advisers impressed upon him the necessity of "going slowly" in the future, and he certainly made a valiant attempt to live up to this advice. But old habits proved too strong, and he soon slipped back into his accustomed ways, and within a few months we read of him careering round the Eastern Province preaching and doing everything much as before.

In March 1913 he had of necessity to take part more prominently than he really desired in the Livingstone Centenary celebrations, in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Vryburg.

Having finished with these he went off on a fortnight's jaunt by bullock-wagon in company with his old friend and fellow-missionary, the Rev. Mr. Wookey, to visit and strengthen the hands of a small body of independent Bechwana Christians living on the borders of the Kaligari

Desert. He was then seventy-eight years old ! Truly an indomitable old man !

To his Sister, Miss Moffat

CAPE TOWN,
April 19, 1913.

“ As to the Centenary, I should have been better pleased if I could have kept in the background,¹ but it is a duty, especially out here, as there is an undercurrent of antagonism among some of the Dutch people, who cannot forget how David Livingstone trounced their parsons for condoning and abetting the ‘voortrekkers’ in the early days of the Transvaal and in their oppression of the Bechwana. Happily there is a strong missionary party in the Dutch Church now, thanks to the influence of Dr. Andrew Murray and his school, and I am glad to meet them half-way in these matters.

We had on the 16th of March a grand meeting in the City Hall—it was Sunday afternoon. There was said to have been 4,000 present, of whom 3,000 would be children and young people. Lady Gladstone presided, and very well too. On the 19th there was another meeting at which Lord Gladstone presided—I had left by then, as I had to take the chair at a meeting in Johannesburg on the same evening. I left next day for Vryburg, where I had to preach on the following Sunday and to take the chair at a meeting in the Town Hall on the 26th. The next fortnight was occupied in a tour by ox-wagon in the company of Mr. Wookey, to Ganyesa and Morokweng. The former place I had visited before, but not the latter. It was the first time I was ever at the scene of the Frédoux tragedy.² Two or three people

¹ Much as Moffat venerated his parents and appreciated their work and that of Dr. Livingstone, there was nothing egotistical about his pride in the family connection, which, indeed, at one period of his life proved most detrimental to his own prospects. This intensified his dislike of anything suggestive of shining by reflected light. He felt strongly that the prominence given to his father’s name in South Africa had, to some extent, unjustifiably overshadowed those of some others as worthy, perhaps, of honour.

At one time during his later years he projected the compilation of a series of papers dealing with what he called “Some Forgotten Worthies.” Other duties prevented him, and only the first of those papers appeared in print. It dealt with Dr. Vander Kemp, the first missionary of the L.M.S to land in South Africa.—AUTHOR.

² In 1866 a drunken trader set fire to the gunpowder in his wagon, and thereby killed not only himself, but the missionary Frédoux and several natives who were standing near.—AUTHOR.



"ADAM," MOFFAT'S OLD SERVANT.

Sent to him by Mosilikatze in 1859, when about six years old.

are still alive who bear the marks of the wounds received in the explosion. The work at both places is most encouraging to see. You will recollect that Morokweng used to be considered one of the wildest and most backward places in the country. I laid the memorial stone of a good stone church, the walls of which are already built except just at the place where the memorial stone had to be fitted.

On return to Vryburg I met Adam ¹ by appointment and brought him with me to Cape Town, and he is now at the Somerset hospital under A.'s treatment [his son, Dr. H. A. Moffat]."

In August 1914 came the Great War. To Moffat militarism represented the negation of all his ideals, and of all he had lived and worked for; but, as in 1899, he recognised that there are occasions when force can only be met by force, and much as he regretted the necessity he could only sadly echo his Master's words: "Woe unto them by whom the offences come."

His opinion on this matter was expressed in a letter to his friend Mr. Edward Unwin senior:

CAPE TOWN,
August 30, 1914.

"I wrote to you about six months ago, but the whole world seems to have been turned upside down since then.

I must confess to being greatly disappointed. I did think that there had been a sufficient advance in the Christianity of the European nations to keep us from this. Not that I blame our own people; I do not see how they could have kept out of it without disgraceful neglect of duty, and I can honestly pray that we may be successful in helping to break down a great military Power, the existence and the temper of which has kept all Europe against its own desires in the condition of a huge armed camp."

In April 1915 Moffat left for Rhodesia, partly for the sake of his health. He had begun to be much troubled with rheumatism, and he welcomed the thought of escaping the wet winter of the Cape Peninsula. He spent some happy weeks with his various children and grandchildren at

¹ His old henchman, who was sent to him as a child of six by Mosilikatze in 1859. He is still living at Kuruman on a plot of ground bought by Mr. Livingstone Moffat for his benefit.—AUTHOR.

Salisbury and Bulawayo, and then in an imprudent hour agreed to act for a few months for the minister of the Presbyterian church in Salisbury, who badly needed a holiday.

This was always an appeal that Moffat found it difficult to resist, but he had this time overestimated his reserve force.

After officiating for only four Sundays he had to confess himself beaten, and in accordance with strongly expressed medical advice he gave up his charge, and on July 23 he left Salisbury for the Colony. It was his last good-bye to the hills and vales of Matabeleland, and as the train bore him across the sandy plains of his loved Bechwanaland he knew that his eyes should rest on them no more.

He reached Port Elizabeth safely, and after spending a few weeks there with his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Malcolm Moffat, he went on to Cape Town, where he arrived on September 28, in health much improved. Ten years had passed since he had spoken of going there "to await the sunset." This time the shadows were indeed lengthening and the long day was wearing to its close.

To an onlooker like the writer, who had watched him during these years at his self-imposed labours, he suggested nothing so much as the vision of an old grey-haired reaper, long since outstripped by his younger fellow-labourers, yet still bending his back in the gathering twilight, intent, if possible, on gathering a few more sheaves with which to come rejoicing into the presence of his Master.

CHAPTER XXXII

“ SUNSET AND EVENING STAR ”

WHEN Moffat left Rhodesia in July 1915 his health was causing grave anxiety among his friends, but his recuperative powers falsified all gloomy anticipations, and within a few months he had in some measure regained the ground lost through his illness. He himself refused to admit that his breakdown had been due to the work he had attempted in Salisbury, for he attributed it to a chance influenzal attack that had preceded it. Nevertheless he recognised its significance, and during the remainder of his days he seemed half unconsciously to adopt the attitude of one awaiting his call. “ I do not greatly desire,” he wrote, “ to live very much longer ; there is so much to fight against and I do not feel up to it ; I am tired.” But, though he might well have claimed that he had already earned his rest, he showed no disposition to take it, and as soon as strength allowed of his doing so he resumed his wonted activities.

His diary shows that he still prepared his weekly sermon, whether called upon to preach or not, and he held on bravely to all such tasks as he felt able to perform. For several years he had been examiner in the Sechwana language for the Cape University, and he continued with usual conscientiousness to take interest and pleasure in his work. His private correspondence was enormous, and his letters, penned in the clear bold hand that remained unchanged up to the day of his death, were reminiscent of a time when letter-writing had not yet become a lost art. The recipients included not only his children and kinsfolk, but hosts of friends. Many octogenarians, like guests who have lingered too long at life's banquet, find themselves at the end sadly isolated. Not so Moffat. He had outlived his

own generation, but his passing, when it came, left a blank in the hearts of many who belonged to the two that succeeded it.

One of his oldest friends was the Rev. James Key, who for over fifty years lived at Petrograd as minister of the English Congregational church there. He and Moffat had been at college together, and the friendship then begun had lasted throughout life, and until January 1917 had been sustained by correspondence.

The prolonged silence which thereafter ensued caused Moffat some anxiety, and early in 1918 he inquired from friends in England whether any news could be obtained of Mr. Key, but beyond the fact that he had left Petrograd nothing more was known. After the Armistice, Mr. Key, then ninety years old, reached England after going through almost incredible hardships. By that time Moffat had gone to his rest, and a few months later his old friend followed him.

During the last three years of his life Moffat only attempted one journey of any length. This was in July 1916, when he went to Umtata on a visit to his son John Bruce Moffat,¹ who was at that time Chief Magistrate in the Transkei Native Territories. This country was new ground to him, and apart from the interest thereby excited, it gave him intense pleasure to see one of his own sons occupying so responsible a post, and one which afforded so much opportunity for just and sympathetic treatment of natives.

After a pleasant stay with his son and daughter-in-law, Moffat proceeded to Somerset East for the purpose of

¹ John Bruce Moffat entered the Cape Civil Service in 1880, and by sheer ability and industry rose to its highest ranks. For several years he had held important posts, and in 1915 was appointed Auditor-General for the Union of South Africa. Before taking up his duties, however, the post of chief magistrate for the native territories of the Transkei fell vacant, and the Government, having no suitable man available, asked Moffat to undertake it. This he consented to do, and during the three years he held the position he gained the complete confidence of the natives, and his death called forth universal expressions of grief. It occurred with tragic suddenness, on January 16, 1919, just three weeks after that of his father, as a result of heatstroke while taking a long walk with his young daughter and a school friend on a very hot day. Only two days before he had been appointed Secretary for Native Affairs, a position only second in importance, perhaps, to that of the Prime Minister. The *Cape Times*, in referring to his death, spoke of it as "one of the severest blows the Public Service and the country have sustained since Union." He was buried where he died, at St. John's River Mouth, one of the beauty spots of South Africa.

officiating at the wedding of Miss Brown, daughter of Vryburg friends, who had been his host and hostess for some months when he was living there. This delicate compliment to their old minister gave him keen pleasure, especially as in Miss Brown he had found, as he always put it, an adopted granddaughter.

By the end of October 1916 Moffat was back in Cape Town, and thereafter, except for brief visits to places in the vicinity, he roamed no more. He continued to preach, though more rarely, until the end of 1917, but after this he had to desist, and he remarked sorrowfully in one of his letters, “I suppose I must accept the fact that my preaching days are over.”

His last notable appearance in the pulpit was on the occasion of the Centenary of his father’s landing in Cape Town.

A special service was held on January 14, 1917, in Kloof Street Congregational Church, at which he preached before a large audience.

His deafness had now increased to such an extent that he could hear but little in church, and this deprivation he felt deeply; and though he continued to be a regular attendant, it was, as he said, only for the sake of example and not because of any advantage that he obtained.

As the year 1918 passed it became manifest that he was failing fast. The rheumatism that had long troubled him began to interfere with his long walks, which had been a lifelong habit; even up to the time when he was nearing seventy-five he had always been ready to join an expedition up to the top of Table Mountain.

There is little doubt that the War shortened his days; to him, as to so many others who could only wait and pray, it became one long-drawn-out agony.

Not that he ever had any misgiving concerning the ultimate result. “I have too much faith,” he wrote, “in the eternal justice of the Almighty to imagine that right will not prevail.” But the terrible slaughter and the unnecessary brutalities that were perpetrated by our enemies filled him with horror, and his heart was bowed down in sympathetic grief with the sorrow and suffering that lay around him on every side. His own immediate family circle did not escape, for his eldest grandson, Lieutenant Jack C. Tredgold (3rd Royal Scots) made the great

sacrifice, and lies among the Glorious Dead upon the fields of France.

As time passed he longed and prayed for one thing, that he might live to see Peace come to a weary and devastated world, and he obtained his heart's desire.

The last letter from him received by the writer, dated December 11, 1918, was in reply to one in which an account had been given of the Armistice celebrations in London. Attention was drawn in the letter to the orderliness of the crowd, though the writer did not fail to point out that the sobriety noticed, in some measure no doubt, had been due to lack of opportunity rather than to virtue.

CAPE TOWN,
December 11, 1918.

MY DEAR R.,

Your letter of November 13 reached me yesterday. I was so glad to have your account of the sensation in London on receipt of the good news on the 11th. The account of the ovation to the King and Queen was simply thrilling. I was so thankful, too, that you were able to tell of the absence of disorder and drunkenness. Surely it is an earnest of good for the future of the dear old land, the land of our fathers. Here the news has been received with much enthusiasm, but it does not come home to many people here as it must have done at home. Of course, I except those who have given their dear ones to the great struggle, in so many cases not to welcome them back. Yesterday there was a hearty welcome in Cape Town to the Spring Boks, who landed in the morning. There were some sad mothers, who nevertheless joined in the throng to meet the men. There is a good feeling of fellowship abroad which I hope may leave a lasting impression. I think the Nationalists must be feeling a bit sheepish.

We are jogging along here. I am not, so to speak, flourishing. The doctor says I must not go about by myself, so I have always to have a companion, and this hampers my movements considerably. I am subject to fits of giddiness, the rheumatism is much as usual. . . .

Your affectionate father,

J. S. MOFFAT.

In September he had gone for a few weeks to the Caledon Baths in the hope that the treatment there might be

beneficial. But it was of no avail, and he returned to Cape Town in the middle of October. He then spent a fortnight at Sea Point with his sister Mrs. Price, herself crippled with rheumatism. It was pleasing to both of them to have this little time together, their last in this world; but the final separation between them was not a long one, for five months after her brother's death Mrs. Price also passed away.

The attacks of giddiness to which Moffat refers in his letter had begun to trouble him a month or two before. At first merely transient, they became more pronounced until they assumed the form of definite periods of unconsciousness, due to a rather rare type of cardiac irregularity resulting from degenerative changes, in this case of a senile kind.

It was a severe trial to his independent spirit when his doctor prohibited his going abroad alone, and he began to dread the thought of becoming entirely dependent upon others.

Happily this last indignity did not fall to his share.

The heart attacks, gradually increasing in frequency, though distressing to watch, caused no pain, and on coming round after one of them he would express surprise at the signs of agitation on the part of those beside him, and he would continue the thread of a conversation just as though it had not been interrupted.

On December 13, after an unusually severe attack, he got upstairs with some difficulty and did not again come down. But he refused to keep his bed, and up to the last day of his life he insisted on rising and dressing himself. His eldest daughter, Mrs. Loosley, was already in Cape Town, and two of his sons were able to arrive in time to spend the last few days with him; the remainder, scattered far and wide, were denied this privilege.

On the 22nd he wrote his last letter, to his missionary son, the Rev. Malcolm Moffat, and on the same day addressed a large number of envelopes containing New Year cards. This finished he said, “These are to be posted after Christmas.” His busy pen had now come finally to rest. On the afternoon of the 24th he remarked quietly, “The end is not far off now.” Then, calling his sons and daughter around him, like the patriarch of old, he named his children and grandchildren in order of age from the oldest to the youngest. To each he sent his farewell blessing, con-

cluding with the hope that he should meet them all again in the land to which he was going. On the following morning, Christmas Day, he seemed to rally and insisted on getting up, but the attacks of unconsciousness grew more frequent and prolonged. In the intervals he seemed to wake up as if from sleep, and once on doing so he remarked, "I have been dreaming that I was up-country." Even in his last moments his thoughts were back among his own people for whom he had lived and laboured.

And so, as Christmas Day wore to its close, the last sands ran swiftly out, and while the deepening shadows of evening were falling behind his own loved mountain across the Bay, there fell

"The Sundown splendid and serene,
Death"—

bringing silence and with it peace.

In the Municipal Gardens of Cape Town there stands a large portrait-statue of him who gave his name to Rhodesia.

The figure faces north, one hand upraised, as though in gesture, pointing across the intervening "flats" to the distant but clear-cut line of mountains that forms the gateway of Southern Africa. On the pedestal are engraved some words which once fell from his own lips, "Your hinterland is there." Standing thus, as it will

". . . when future suns
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft
While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze"—

it will speak to generations yet unborn of the great Empire builder; for the dream of Rhodes has been fulfilled, and the Pax Britannica broods over an unbroken stretch from the Agulhas Bank to the Pharos light.

Hard by, in the quiet cemetery at Mowbray, under the shadow of Table Mountain, the curious stranger may note a humble grave, where, beside his loved wife, sleeps one who, inspired by other—may we say higher?—motives, helped to blaze a trail to that far-off hinterland when Rhodes was as yet a child. In so doing he sought not wealth, not sovereignty except that of peace, truth, and justice. The Kingdom he looked for tarries yet in its coming, and the fulfilment of *his* dream still lies in the womb of Time.

No monument except the stone that marks his last resting-place will keep his memory green, but surely—unless his faith was but a mocking vision—every life of high endeavour and self-sacrifice, transient and fruitless though it may seem, is in itself the harbinger of a brighter morning which must one day dawn, and so far as his influence hastened its appearing, “he being dead yet speaketh, and his works do follow him.”

APPENDIX

THE BRITISH-MATABELE TREATY

GUBULAWAYO,
February 11, 1888.

“ SIR,

I have the honour to forward certified copy of an agreement into which the Chief Lo Bengula is willing to enter with Her Majesty's Government. He has just put his own hand to it after protracted discussion and explanation. I am thoroughly satisfied that he understands what he has done, and that his desires and intentions are fully in accord with the tenor of the document.

There would have been very little hesitation about his signing it but for the fact that he and his councillors have been much perplexed by the pretensions which have been put forward by certain visitors to his country to be messengers from the English Government, more especially by two persons who were here recently and claimed to be on a secret mission to him from the Government, with proposals of a much more serious nature than mine.

It was put to me as a serious difficulty that perhaps in my absence these or others might come with another kind of message, and how were they to know the true from the false? I referred them to the fact that wide publicity had been given to my mission, insomuch that every European in the country knew of my coming before I arrived, and also to the fact that I came with an escort of mounted police.

Two Europeans resident in the country were present during the whole discussion, but in view of a bitter feeling which exists here between English and Dutch, they preferred that their names should not appear. Those who have signed as witnesses are troopers of the Bechuanaland Police. I ought to state, however, that I received the most valuable aid from Mr. Tainton, who is a skilled linguist, and acted when necessary as interpreter.

I have, etc.,
(Signed) J. S. MOFFAT,
Assistant Commissioner.

To His Honour the Deputy Commissioner,
Bechuanaland Protectorate.

THE BRITISH-MATABELE TREATY

The Chief Lo Bengula, Ruler of the tribe known as the Amandebele, together with the Mashona and Makakalaka, tributaries of the same, hereby agrees to the following articles and conditions :

That peace and amity shall continue for ever between Her Britannic Majesty, her subjects, and the Amandebele people ; and the contracting Chief Lo Bengula engages to use his utmost endeavours to prevent any rupture of the same, to cause the strict observance of this treaty, and so to carry out the spirit of the treaty of friendship which was entered into between his late father, the Chief Umsiligaas, with the then Governor of the Cape of Good Hope in the year of our Lord 1836.

It is hereby further agreed by Lo Bengula, Chief in and over the Amandebele country with its dependencies as aforesaid, on behalf of himself and people, that he will refrain from entering into any correspondence or treaty with any Foreign State or Power to sell, alienate, or cede, or permit or countenance any sale, alienation, or cession of the whole or any part of the said Amandebele country under his chieftainship, or upon any other subject, without the previous knowledge and sanction of Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa.

In faith of which I, Lo Bengula, on my part have hereunto set my hand at Gubulawayo, Amandebeleland, this eleventh day of February, and of Her Majesty's reign the fifty-first.

(Signed) LO BENGULA, his X mark.

Witnesses—

(Signed) W. GRAHAM.

(Signed) G. B. VAN WYK.

Before me,

(Signed) J. S. MOFFAT,

Assistant Commissioner.

February 11, 1888.

I certify the above a true copy.

(Signed) J. S. MOFFAT,

Assistant Commissioner.

February 11, 1888.

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